evam

forum on indian representations

3: 1 & 2 (2004)



Maitreya Bodhisattva, probably Tsang or Western Tibet, 15th c.

PARADIGM OF HINDU-BUDDHIST RELATIONS

SUNTHAR VISUVALINGAM AND ELIZABETH CHALIER-VISUVALINGAM

The Inner Revolution and the Global Renaissance
ROBERT A. F. THURMAN

Logic, Morals and Meditation
ARINDAM CHAKRABARTI

The U-Turn Theory
RAJIV MALHOTRA

Samvada as a Literary and Philosophical Genre
LAURIE L. PATTON

samvad india

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contents

DIACRITICAL CHART

THE DEVANĀGARĪ SCRIPT AND TRANSLITERATION

The script with its correct transliteration is as follows:

स्वर (*svara*):	vowel	mātrā	vowel	mātrā
	अ = a		आ = ā	ा
	इ = i	ि	ई = ī	ी
	उ = u	ु	ऊ = ū	ू
	ऋ = ṛ	ृ	ॠ = ṝ	
	ऌ = ḷ			
	ए = e	े	ऐ = ai	ै
	ओ = o	ो	औ = au	ौ

व्यञ्जन (*vyañjana*):

वर्ग *varga*	स्पर्श *sparśa*				अनुनासिक *anunāsika*	अन्तःस्थ *antaḥstha*	ऊष्मन *ūṣman*
	-V-A	-V+A	+V-A	+V+A	+V	+V	-V
कण्ठ्य *kaṇṭhya*	क ka	ख kha	ग ga	घ gha	ङ ṅa		[ह][ha]
तालव्य *tālavya*	च ca	छ cha	ज ja	झ jha	ञ ña	य ya	श śa
मूर्धन्य *mūrdhanya*	ट ṭa	ठ ṭha	ड ḍa	ढ ḍha	ण ṇa	र ra	ष ṣa
दन्त्य *dantya*	त ta	थ tha	द da	ध dha	न na	ल la	स sa
ओष्ठ्य *oṣṭhya*	प pa	फ pha	ब ba	भ bha	म ma	व va	

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I, Makarand Paranjape, hereby declare that the particulars given above are true to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Makarand Paranjape
Publisher

As this third volume of *Evam* goes to press, I find myself here, in Banaras, beginning to write its Foreword. One of the recurrent themes of this issue is, of course, the interrelationship between Hinduism and Buddhism. These have often been depicted in dialectical or oppositional terms. But on a closer study and examination, it is clear that these are what we might call "co-sanatani," coeval partners of the same timeless wisdom tradition. In the West, unfortunately, Buddhism is usually studied independently and in isolation of its land of birth, India. Robert A. F. Thurman's opening address in this volume goes a long way to redress this misreading. Thurman's introduction is actually an edited transcript of his inaugural address at the Indic Colloquium on "Completing the Global Renaissance: The Indic Contribution," held from 24th to 29th July, 2002, at the Menla Centre in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York. Most of us who were present found this a truly extraordinary event, not just intellectually enriching, but personally unforgettable. It was not just an exchange of ideas but also a celebration of our collective endeavours and commitments. Most of the contents of this volume of *Evam* owe their origins to this meeting.

Sponsored by the Infinity Foundation and executed with remarkable courtesy and efficiency by Tom Yarnall, the conference had the following objectives:

I. To critique the tacitly or overtly presumed intellectual superiority of the West so as to put the dialogue between the Indic and the Western on an equal footing (while at the same time avoiding a reactionary triumphalism from the Indic side);

II. To critique negative stereotypes of Indic traditions, assessing the damage such stereotypes cause, and to consider measures to counteract them;

III. To heal the breach between the Vedist and the Buddhist perspectives within the self-understanding of Indic civilisation, in order to restore this civilisation to its full dimensions;

IV. To develop the materials for a deeper appreciation of the crown jewel of Indic civilisation, its Inner Sciences (*adhyatmavidya* – including philosophy, psychology, epistemology, linguistics, and so forth), as supporting and supported by the Outer Sciences ("traditional knowledge systems") and as crucial to creative revisions of history and society, and to develop styles of presenting these sciences as extremely commensurable with and highly valuable to the rebalancing and furthering of contemporary science in the global context.

This, of course, is an ongoing agenda, which cannot be accomplished either by one conference or by one volume, but needs the sustained efforts of thousands of people across the world over generations. On a more modest scale, however, both Infinity Foundation, which sponsored the conference, and Samvad India Foundation, the publishers of this volume, are partners in this enterprise. I would like therefore to specially thank Rajiv Malhotra, the President of Infinity Foundation, in addition to Robert Thurman, the conference host and coordinator, and our guest editor, Tom Yarnall, for their support and encouragement in making this issue of *Evam* a reality.

As usual, though, we also have a lot of other material in this issue, including a visually rich feature on Ajanta, with the homespun commentaries of S. Swaminathan and some rare photographs by Benoy Behl. Behl's work is being highlighted in this issue, with the publication of some of his stunning photographs of Ajanta, his brief essay on mural paintings in India and his conversation with Chandana Dutta about his work. Sunthar and Elizabeth Visuvalingam's dissertation on Pachali Bhairava in Nepal, which fits in quite well with the Hindu-Buddhist theme of the issue, was a welcome contribution. The manner in which its publication has been blocked over the last ten years would make a story in its own right. We are happy that it is being published in full, with the editorial and other changes that its authors wanted to make to bring it up to date. We are also pleased to continue our "Debate" section with thoughtful and well-argued rejoinder to the Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen's seemingly ill-considered and unsubstantiated remarks on the *Bhagavad Gita*. To me, what is objectionable, if not hurtful, is Sen's attitude, apparently casual and cavalier, to the *Gita*, whose reading and interpretation are so central to the Indic civilisation. I feel certain that Professor Sen would not have treated a Western source so carelessly; indeed, such a lack of scholarship or rigour would not have gone down so easily in those places where his reputation has been made. But when it comes to a "Hindu" text, it is much easier to be ill-informed or less thorough. Because he comes from India, the West may, and does, consider Sen to be both reliable and authoritative on Indic sources, which only compounds the damage that the possible inaccuracies or distortions in his argument may cause. This issue of *Evam* also includes two outstanding research papers. Rajesh Kasturirangan and Vinay Kumar's essay on perception is an outcome of painstaking research and writing over a period of two years at MIT, Boston,

where both of them were Ph. D. students. One reason why I am excited by it is that it represents a unique interface between science and spirituality, especially from an Indic perspective. The challenge is to succeed in both areas and also in each separately, which few such endeavours manage to accomplish. The other extraordinary paper is by Nupur Chaudhuri and Rajat Kanta Ray on the Bauls of Bengal. On the surface, it may seem like a subalternist move to valorise what is normally neglected and marginalised, but actually the paper works its own alchemy, reinterpreting the ancient idea of the *purusharthas* or cardinal values of human life.

Banaras, or Kashi, and *Evam* seem to have an intrinsic link. Our first volume (2001) featured as its cover story a report on an exciting assignment on this ancient city. The Crossings Project designed by Ranjit Makkuni and Madhu Khanna was an attempt to understand and explain the various facets of Kashi through a multi-media, high-tech package in which modernity itself participates in reinterpreting and representing a complex and vibrant tradition. Just before my departure to Banaras, Madhu showed me some of the startlingly original features of her project, which was on display at Chinmaya Mission, New Delhi, on the opening night of the conference on Indic Religious Traditions of the International Association for the History of Religions. Though I was a part of the Banaras project, I had missed seeing it when it opened in New Delhi and New York. I now had my first glimpse of its riches and resources. As I picked up a *trishul*, which was one of the many objects associated with Shiva, the screen lit up to explain its symbolic significance and its connection with Kashi. Next, I saw the beautiful picture of Shiva painted by an artist from Kerala – the same picture that we had used on the cover of the first volume of *Evam*. Kashi, Shivapuri, the city of Shiva as the Lord of the Universe or Vishwanath, seemed to beckon me.

My flight took off late and landed seven hours after its scheduled time. The seasonal fog had thrown the entire schedule off-gear. We were even diverted to Lucknow, the capital of Uttar Pradesh, before being brought to our destination. It was dusk by the time my taxi entered the city. The driver, Sangram, was an amazing character – like all people in Banaras are – opinionated, cocky, and very intelligent. He complained of the low wages, but said that he stuck to the job because the owner "spoke nicely," which was rare nowadays: "I wouldn't be able to tolerate any abuse, misbehaviour, or bad manners."

During the long drive into this congested city, he proceeded to narrate to me a story of some *baratis* or guests of a wedding party, whom he was driving to the venue of the wedding. "There was thick fog that night. We were driving towards Ghazipur, where the wedding was. Suddenly, one of the men said, 'Driver Sahab, stop the car.' There were five of them and they all wanted not so much to have some drinks but to get drunk. Many hours passed. I dozed off in the car. Suddenly, I was rudely awakened with a volley of abuses." Sangram proceeded to repeat them in his Bhojpuri accent; I can assure you that they are unprintable. "Well, I thought to myself," he continued, "he is the master, I the driver, so I must accept all this humbly, but I said, '*Huzoor, gaali kyun det hoh*? I'll do whatever you want.' But the drunk *baraati* retorted, 'You son-of-a-dog, another word and I'll slap you.' He wanted me to drive to

the grog shop where his four companions were waiting. I wasn't sure how they'd treat me all the way to the wedding; having five drunk, unruly men in my care wasn't appetising. As I started the car, I thought these guys needed to be taught some manners. So I opened the door on his side, nudged him out onto the road, and drove back to Banaras! He and his companions must have had a lot of fun that night; it was very cold and they had neither any transport nor any warm clothes to speak off. I said to myself, 'These are foul-mouthed people; let them eat 'sweets' all night!'

"Next evening, the man in charge of the wedding party complained to my owner. I told my boss, 'Here are the keys to your car. Jai Ram ji! I can't work where I'm abused or slapped.' You know, I had no other job, but I thought, it is better to starve to death than to work like a slave. The owner took me back and told the man who had hired the car, 'Your guests had no right to abuse my driver. Take your money back; I'd rather lose a customer than a good worker.' So you see, Sir, we may be ordinary people, but we have our dignity. Of course, from then on, I always say no to *baraatis*."

Throughout its tartan history, the people of Banaras have shown this fierce pride and self-respect. They may have been down, but they were never out. Even the humblest rickshaw puller shows his spirit when he is challenged. One of them, who took us to the temple, smelled of country liquor. I asked him if he had had a peg too many and he said, "Sir, I can take you to your destination, rest assured about that. But if you ask me such awkward questions, how can we get along?" I tipped him five rupees when we arrived safely, through the narrow lanes and insane traffic of the city, to the ghats.

The *aarti* or the evening vespers were going on when we reached the river. Rows upon rows of beggars, who lined the ghats, were singing, arms or even stubs of arms, raised. It was an unusual experience as we walked down between these devout vagrants, none of whom bothered to beg during the *aarti*, but who would be sure to badger you on your way back up. A magnificent bull lay curled up, totally at ease, indrawn and introspective, unconcerned with us passersby. I would not have been surprised if it was meditating. I immediately thought of Raja Rao and his evocative book, *On Ganga Ghat.* Sure enough, later I encountered a talking parrot too, in a lane behind the Kala Bhairava temple.

We descended the steps to the river, getting our *prasad* on the way down. The waters were covered by bobbing boats. I went down to the river and sprinkled some water on my head. It was none too clean, with floating lamps, flowers, and some riverside scum, but it was the Ganges nevertheless. Up ahead, in the larger boats, we saw pilgrims going for the dusk boat rides. Two little children, a boy and a girl, raced each other at the ghats, with their own improvised lamps. They would pick any lamp they found, pour some of the oil from it to augment their own meagre supply, and set their lamp afloat on the river, giggling all the while. As we walked back, I found a friendly mendicant who changed my note into many coins. All the arms were now stretched towards me, clamouring for their share of small change. But the Banaras beggars, I thought, were different. They were so generous with their blessings! Some were not beggars

at all. I found a toothless man sitting quietly by himself. As I approached him, he gave me a gummy, inquisitive smile, surprised somewhat that I was offering him a coin. Then he raised his hand high as he accepted it, "*Jai bhole baba, jai ganga maiyya*."

Whatever else it may be, Banaras is the city of Shiva. Everything here is Shiva-saturated. You taste, smell, eat, sleep, and dream only Shiva. Even the quarrelling rickshaw pullers are Shiva. In the twilight dust, your rickshaw collides with another one. The wheels are interlocked. The rickshaw puller on the left utters a volley of abuses. Your rickshaw-wallah is actually at fault, but tenders a full and feisty response. The other driver pulls himself up to his full height and returns a contemptuous look as if to say, "To lie after having made a mistake is beneath contempt." Your rickshaw puller is abashed, though he tries hard not to show it. He concedes to the other by pulling back and letting him pass. Shiva has reprimanded Shiva and the harmony of Shiva's creation is restored.

At the Vishwanath temple, despite the crowds and foul smell, there is a certain sense of splendour. This Shiva is small, almost completely covered with flowers, *bel* leaves and other offerings. But when we enter, as if by magic, the priest removes the accumulations and dumps them unceremoniously into the refuse basket. Next door, the mosque that Aurangzeb built is totally cordoned off and barricaded. The white mosque looks lonely and pale in the evening light, while the temple is bustling with devotees. Despite all the humiliations and setbacks, Hindu India survives, even flourishes. At the Annapurna temple, the Goddess, wide-eyed with outpouring grace, who personally feeds every denizen of Banaras, looks calmly at us, with her shiny, metallic, exposed face, while the rest of her is covered with decorations and flowers. On another day, at the Kala Bhairava temple, we get knotted black threads to ward off the evil eye and bad luck.

I am suddenly and startlingly reminded of why I wanted to write about Banaras in this Foreword. During the international conference on Kashmir Shaivism which was being jointly hosted by the Mutkabodha Ashrama and the Banaras Hindu University, a professor of philosophy from Panjab University, Chandigarh, in a personal aside, revealed how he grew up with both Buddhism and Shaivism, never seeing them as separate or opposed. "It was only when we read philosophy that we were taught to see them in conflict." That remark set me thinking, reminding me of an earlier visit to this city. Then, at the Vishwanath temple at BHU, I remembered reading a marble plaque honouring the Buddha. I think the plaque had said that Hinduism and Buddhism are offshoots of the same Arya Dharma, which has billions of followers all over the East. In fact, during my first visit, I was intensely struck by this truth at Sarnath itself, where the Buddha had set the wheel of Dharma rolling. Now, the speaker in this conference was saying the same thing, albeit in a slightly different way.

During my four days at Banaras, I really felt as if I was Shiva's guest. I was treated with such courtesy by one and all. My accommodation at the BHU guest house was very spacious and comfortable. I had a suite of rooms to myself. My bedroom faced the East. Each morning, I chanted the names of the sun, greeting its warming beams. The seminar on Kashmir Shaivism seemed to

open up new vistas of thought, taking me back to my early forays in Indic traditions. The resource-persons were learned men – Professors Kamalesh Jha, K. D. Tripathi, D. B. Sensharma, and H. N. Chakravarty all shared their wisdom and insights with us. I remembered my teacher, the late Professor Girdhari Lal Tikku, who had first put Jayadeva Singh's translation of *Vijnana Bhairava* into my hands twenty years ago. Kashmir Shaivism was the only philosophy where the bondage and liberation of the human being was explained as the self-restriction and self-expansion of Shiva himself, thereby leaving nothing un-divine either theologically or ontologically. As Professor Moti Lal Pandit, a great scholar of Kashmir Shaivism whom I met at the conference, put it, "An individual being is basically ontologically non-different from ultimate Reality, which is interpreted as being of the nature of pure Consciousness. It is on account of ignorance that the individual being thinks of himself as limited, or takes the limited entities as the basis of his Self." The beauty of Kashmir Shaivism is that it accepts no separation, no fall from the Divine. When one's epistemological errors are corrected, one is instantly liberated. As Panditji explains it, "The Lord, while concealing his divine nature, manifests himself as a bound individual. The individual being breaks up the barriers of his boundedness the moment he recognises (*pratyabhijna*) his essential nature to be non-different from that of Shiva."

This was the great gift that I felt I had received from the *paramguru*, the only guru in fact – Shiva himself – in his own city, Banaras.

The knowledge, and what is more important, the experience of one's own Shivahood confers a unique dignity and autonomy on the individual. The key word in Kashmir Shaivism, *svatantrata*, is also the word used to signify Indian political independence. No wonder, Madan Mohan Malaviya, the founder of BHU, wanted to build an institution that would nurture the intellectual and cultural independence of India. He says this clearly in one of his *dohas* or couplets that graces the plaque dedicated to him in the Vishwanath temple at BHU: "*Paap deenta, daridrata aur daasata paap/ Prabhu deeje svadheenta, mitaye sakala santaap*." "Sinful is meanness and inferiority, sinful slavery/ Lord give us the independence that ends all woes." Banaras represents this resistance to slavery, which is Shiva's greatest gift to each of us.

Makarand Paranjape

The Inner Revolution and the Global Renaissance: Re-integration of Buddhism and Vedism (Hinduism) in Indic Religious Studies

Robert A. F. Thurman

MY TOPIC TODAY IS the reintegration of Buddhism and Hinduism. Many years ago, I was a student working on the millennium of dialogue between the Buddhist logicians, the Pramanikas, and the Vedist Logicians, the Naiyayikas and the Vaisheshikas. I was reading a book by Dhirendra Nath Shastri, the great professor of Indic philosophy at Agra, well-known to all. In the salutation to his book, Professor Shastri included a Guruparampara where he salutes Gautama – not Shakyamuni Buddha – but Gautama of the Nyaya tradition; he salutes Dignaga, the great Buddhist logician, and the Naiyayika Uddyotakara and Udayanacharaya of the Navya-Nyaya. Finally, there is this really funny name that one never could imagine in Sanskrit – s*chirbatskay* – what is this? Then, one realises, it is the Russian scholar of the turn of last century, Theodor Stcherbatski! A Russian scholar in the Guruparampara of the honourable Professor D. N. Shastri!

In his introductory remarks, Professor Shastri tells the story of how he went to every pundit in Bombay, Calcutta, Benaras, trying to understand the growth and development of the Naiyayika and Vaisheshika traditions, from the *sutrakara* to major commentators of a good thousand years later. There were gaps and jumps in the tradition that he just could not fill in to his own satisfaction. One found many references to those nasty *Nastikas*, the Bauddhas such as Vasubandhu, Dignaga, and Dharmakirti, but nobody understood what it referred to. None of the Mahapanditas in all the *vidyalayas* in Pune, Bombay, etc., could tell him what it was all about. So, then, as he was wandering in intellectual exile, he bumped into a book in English by T. Stcherbatski, a Russian scholar with a very strong

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This introduction is an edited transcript of Robert A. F. Thurman's inaugural address at the Indic Colloquium on "Completing the Global Renaissance: The Indic Contribution," held from 24th to 29th July, 2002, at the Menla Centre, in the Catskill Mountains in upstate New York.

command over Sanskrit, having studied in Bombay in the late nineteenth century, and who was also conversant in Tibetan sources, having studied with excellent Buryat Mongolian scholars, such as Tsenshap Ngawang Dorjieff. And, suddenly, the light dawned on the young Professor Shastri. He began to understand all dimensions of the growth of Indian logical philosophy, seeing how it developed in a common Buddhist-Jainist-Vedist culture from the time of what I call the "Inner Revolution" of the middle of the first millennium before the Common Era. Professor Lal Mani Joshi called it the "Shramanic movement," which I consider very apt, but I like to refer to it as a "revolution," to counter the stereotype of Indic spirituality as unconcerned with relative and social reality and ineffectual in bringing about social change. Max Weber, for example, despite his acknowledgement that the Buddhist movement was the originator of the powerfully transformative social institution that the West came to know as "monasticism," referred to Buddhism as "otherworldly ascetical," and "socially apathetic."

What do I mean by "Inner Revolution"? I sometimes also call it "Cool Revolution." We use the term "revolution" to indicate an intellectual, political, and social movement that overturns the order of a society, usually with violence, replacing an *ancient regime* of royalty or aristocracy by either a new king and court, or in modern times by a democratic oligarchy or a "people's dictatorship." The outburst of social individualism of the mid-first millennium BCE in India, expressed as the rejection of the Vedist cosmological, ritual, and social order and the assertion of the individual's ultimate right to withdraw from dharma as social duty to adopt a life-purpose and ultimate goal of absolute freedom from personal suffering, in Nirvana or Moksha – this was nothing less than a revolution. It was eventually reflected in the massive number of texts that ushered in the classical age of Indic greatness and that are still remembered most vividly today by all parties worldwide, the more radical *sutras* of the Shramanist Buddhists and Jains, and the more conservative Vedist Upanishads and the various post-Upanishadic *sutras*. This revolution was not violent for the most part, but was gradual and social, its new institutions and social practices emanating from internal changes in the hearts and minds of masses of individuals rather than from political upheavals. That is why I call it "Inner."

In my popular book of that name, I analyse the "Inner Revolution" as articulating five main principles: (1) transcendent individualism, (2) non-violent pacifism, (3) educationalism, (4) social altruism, and the last, (5) universalistic democratism. (1) The first comes from the discovery of the human opportunity to achieve complete Moksha, Nirvana, or absolute freedom from suffering. Once that is deemed possible, what higher aim could there be for a precious human lifetime? Dharma became newly defined as "truth," "reality," even "freedom," transcending its old "pattern-maintaining" meanings of law, duty, religion, obligation and so forth. (2) The second follows from the first, in that life becomes too precious to waste in killing and being killed in tribal wars, for example, and so the higher heroism of non-violence and inner, self-conquest becomes elevated over militaristic violence – the resultant gentleness being extended to other animals as well as humans. (3) The third

follows then, since intellectual, spiritual, and moral education is required in order to attain perfect freedom, to become an *Arhat*, *Jina*, Buddha, or *jivanmukti*. Education itself then becomes the main purpose of life, rather than just a training for some sort of vocation, in pursuit of *kama*, *artha*, or dharma defined as familial, social, moral duty. The anchor institution of the educationalist's life-long pursuit of learning and self-transformation was the monastery, the vihara abode of the male and female celibate seeker of Moksha and Nirvana. (4) The fourth then follows, since the collective must support the individual human, whose life-pursuit to attain freedom becomes the highest social good. (5) The fifth, perhaps rather complicated historically, involves the transformation of the image of kingship from that of the *Mahabharata's Shanti Parvan* image of divinely sanctioned authority to the *Aggannya Sutta's* more egalitarian notion of the king as *Mahasammata*, the "Great Elected One," perhaps coming to undergird the later Ashokan notion of the king as the servant of the imperial subject.

So, the Indic achievement during this "Axial Age" can be seen as an "Inner Revolution," a revolution guided primarily by the Upanishadic thinkers, the Buddhists, and the Jains, though predominantly Shramanist. It brought about a tremendous efflorescence in India; indeed, it actually created the classical Indian civilisation that placed *adhyatma-vidya,* Inner Science, at the pinnacle of the sciences; the civilisation that enshrined individualistic, transcendentalist monasticism at its heart; a civilisation that slowly turned the tide against the dominance of militarism even in the midst of a violent world, a world of Cyrus and Darius, Alexander the Great, Hunas, Kushanas, and so forth; the civilisation that developed the most sophisticated philosophies ever devised by man of Abhidharma, Shad-darshana, Vijnanavada, Madhyamika, and Vedanta, and so forth; the civilisation that arguably did most – relative to the time in Eurasia, of course – to ameliorate the rigidity of class divisions and elevate the status of women; the civilisation that patronised the arts to the greatest heights, enjoying its Shakespeare (Kalidasa) in the fourth or fifth common era century; the civilisation that advanced spiritual devotion through the Bhakti movements of the Mahayanist *Saddharmapundarika* and *Sukhavati sutras*, the Bodhisattva-cults of Avalokiteshvara and Tara, and the Vedist Krishna and Shiva movements; the civilisation that evolved the initially esoteric supreme depth psychologies articulated in the Buddhist and Vedist Tantric traditions. This civilisation, flowering from that "Axial Age" time until the entrance into India of the first Abrahamic "Westerners," was the Eurasian civilisation that most emphasised the individual's right to full freedom; that invented yoga, primarily elevating inner self-conquest over outer conquest of others, monasticism over militarism; that embraced a culture that allowed for the mutually tolerant and pluralistic Vedist and Shramanist (Buddhist and Jain) culture. That great fifteen hundred year period in India involved the interplay between Buddhists and Vedists, as they are better called, rather than "Hindus." So, the dialogue between these Buddhists and Vedists – *Nastikas* and *Astikas* – was key to many of India's great cultural achievements. This is one of my central points: as we work toward a better understanding of the uniqueness and greatness and multifacetedness of Indian civilisation,

we should educate ourselves to recover aspects of the interrelationship, long-since forgotten, between the Vedist aspects and the non-Vedist aspects, not just today but from ancient times.

When I first moved to Columbia from Amherst college, where I had taught for fourteen years, and, therefore, was finally able to deal with graduate education, which I had wanted to do for many years – I appealed to my colleagues to overcome the division I had faced in graduate school, where one group of students and faculty studied "Hinduism" and the Vedic-oriented traditions, and another group focused on "Buddhist Studies" and spent their time mainly under the wing of colleagues in East Asia, because people thought of "Buddhism" as "non-Indian." We in Buddhist Studies called the "Hinduists" the *devas*, which I guess meant we were the *manushya*, the mere humans. And, I remember one of my teachers who I deeply revered and learned much from, but who always disapproved of my "Buddhist Studies" – that teacher at one time suggested that I change my thesis topic from a study of the Madhyamika tradition of critical philosophy to a medieval text, perhaps by Madhva, called *Bauddha Dik Vachana*, or *How to say "Phooey!" to the Buddhists*. I was tempted, since it sounded like fun, but somehow I didn't change my topic!

Never mind the past divisions, if we want students to learn about Indic civilisation, with its religions, philosophies, sciences, and arts, then we should develop an educational system that ensures that those who want to specialise in the Vedist side should really know Buddhism and Jainism well, and those who want to specialise in the Shramanist side, mainly Buddhism and Jainism, should really know Vedism well. Education in Indic civilisation should be thoroughly integrated – Sanskrit and Prakrit, ancient and modern, Vedist and Shramanist, scientific and artistic. The current practice in the West, also in evidence here, which separates "Buddhist Studies" from Hinduism or "South Asian Religions," on the premise either that Buddhism is only marginal since the beginning of the Western invasions or that Buddhism is really an East Asian phenomenon, doesn't make sense in historical or actual fact, and it produces scholars in both fields with distorted views.

Lal Mani Joshi wrote a marvellous book called *Studies in the Buddhistic Culture of Ancient India*, in which he valiantly began to remedy the problem of historical bias resulting from ignorance of the Buddhist contribution to the civilisation of India. He quotes some fascinating statistics – for example, the Archaeological Survey of India recorded (at the time of first publication of *Studies* in 1960s) twelve hundred major rock-cut monuments throughout the subcontinent. Of these, nine hundred were originally created by Buddhists, one hundred by Jains, and only *two hundred* were originally produced by the Vedists. Eventually, of course, the nine hundred originally Buddhist sites either fell into ruins or were claimed by the Vedists or Jains. Joshi also describes the Buddhist contributions in many other fields, in the sciences, medicine (this has also been well-described by Kenneth Zysk), logic (as mentioned above), *kavya* (poetics and aesthetics), very much in philosophy, monasticism (Vedist monasticism really begins from the time of the Vedist takeover of the Buddhist viharas, before which time the notion of life-long *brahmacharya* was anathema to the Vedists), law and

government (see Nagarjuna's *Suhrllekha*, *Ratnavali*, and other Buddhist *Nitishastras*), literature (*Jatakas* and *Avadanas* are sources for many of the tales of the *Kathasaritsagara* for example), art (due to Vedist aniconism, perhaps the Buddha image and the stupa yakshi were among the first sculptures, lost *pata* paintings possibly among the first icons), and so forth.

Then there is the argument that, if the Buddhist contribution was so vital to the formation and sustenance of Indic civilisation, how could it disappear so completely, after the Turkic invasions and occupations at the end of the first Common Era millennium? The reasons for this tend to be made extra mysterious since the new conquerors' monotheistic intolerance of the Buddhist non- or better, infini-theistic, "idolaters, and the previous Vedist dialogue partners' resurgent intolerance of Buddhist anti-militarist monasticism and individualistic pacifism" – both are embarrassing topics to bring up in the current pluralistic Indic situation. In a way, medieval "Buddhism" was sort of in the position of secularism today, rationalistic and easy-going, ducking for cover somewhat ineffectually in the context of the rising conflict between extremists under the banners of Islamic monotheism and Vedist Vaishnavism or Shaivism.

The key reasons for the disappearance of the Buddhists are really quite obvious – no one wonders about how they have been exterminated recently in China, Mongolia, North Korea, Vietnam, and Tibet. Who did it? Communist absolutists. Absolutists, whether religious or materialist, abhor easy-going, cheerful relativists. The Buddhist base in Indian civilisation was the monastic university, an institution based on a critique of the worldly family. Shakyamuni's story is nothing but a critique of the family. The Vedist base was the family in the village or in the city. You can conquer a country, but you cannot wipe out all the families, because even conquerors have nothing if there are no people to work for them. By contrast, you certainly can eradicate a useless thing such as a monastery. What do you need a monastery for? There are extra men in the monastery doing very little that you see as worthwhile. They have weird Buddhas in there, and also beautiful, goddesses, all coated in gold, wearing jewelled tiaras and other ornaments, which are valuable. They are "idols" after all. So, the monasteries were destroyed. When they were destroyed, the root of "Buddhism" was destroyed. Once the root is gone, the tree cannot grow again without a transplant from somewhere else.

But once "Buddhism" was no longer there in India to keep a creative pressure on the Vedist world, it became more rigid, less creative. It also had the new pressure of the Western monotheist occupiers. It slowly developed its own form of monasticism, life-long *brahmacharis* in ashramas in the hills; but nothing on the scale of Buddhist monasticism was allowed to develop by the new rulers, who were all militarists, not monastic. But now that modern secularism has relativised and pluralised all the religions of India and the world, loosening the absolutisms of Western and Eastern theisms alike – except, of course, for the highly agitated extremist fanatics on all sides – it is time to recover the spiritual pluralism and educationalism that Indic Buddhism maintained within the civilisation.

That brings me to a second central subject, namely what is this "Buddhism"

we are talking about? Buddha never used the word "Buddhism." Since I must explain this very briefly here, I refer you to my book *Inner Revolution*, wherein I argue the social dimension of the Buddhist movement in history. And just in case people worry that I am an evangelical, "a born-again Buddhist," it might reassure them to know that I critique the notion that Buddhism is mainly a religion. The Buddha Dharma in practice is said to consist of the *trini adishikshani*, i.e., the "three higher educations." The first of these higher educations is *shila*, or ethics, which consists of moral practices that reform society, anchored in the institution that the Buddha invented, the monastic school. The second higher education is *chitta* or samadhi, "mind states" or "concentrations," which are psychological, spiritual, and even religious, in that they cultivate the inner beings of persons, de-conditioning their egotistical, automatic mental patterns and cultivating self-transcending, altruistic, and insightfully liberated states of being. This samadhi higher education does not depend on any religious institution, unless the contemplative laboratory, vihara or ashrama, be thought of as primarily religious. The third higher education is *prajna*, wisdom, insight, genius, comprehensive knowledge of the nature of the world and the beyond-the-world. This education in wisdom is really science, "inner science," in that it seeks true reality by exploring the self and the outer world, mind-state by mind-state, atom by atom, cosmos by cosmos. It is not at all religious, not concerned with belief, only concerned with experience of reality, the road to total liberation. It is the quest of what is real and what is there, and it is about not accepting anybody's dictate about what is there. So "Buddhism" is at most one-third religious, another third ethical and socially transformative, and the most important third, scientific and liberational. And since the religious third, samadhi education, is concerned to intensify ethicality and intensify wisdom, and not mainly intended to deepen faith, it is not that religious at all, in the modern, non-rational sense of "religious."

The Buddha was very unique in saying two things that seem completely contrary on the surface. On the one hand, he said, "Oh yeah! I'm a Buddha, an Enlightened One, I have come to know everything quite clearly!" But then, also, he said, "It won't do you any good to believe that. So doubt everything I say." I think that is quite marvellous, not at all religious, not demanding obedience or faith. Furthermore, remember the great verse with which the Buddha has been celebrated for over twenty-five centuries. It is not something such as, "Oh! He met God and God told him this or that," like a Western prophet, or even the idea that he was God (though, later, some Vaishnavas acknowledged his eminence by making him a God, then ignored everything he said by making him a God who plays tricks on the *asuras*!). No, the verse epitome of the teaching was first stated by Ashvajit, one of the first five disciples, to Shariputra, who asked what the Buddha taught.

> *Ye dharmaah hetuprabhavaah hetuun*
> *teshaam tathaagata hyavadat teshaam*
> *chayo nirodho evam vaadi*
> *mahaashramaniye svaaha*

Freely rendered:

> "That all things arise from causes,
> what those causes are, how to cease
> those causes – thus spake the Great
> Ascetic."

Is there anything "religious" about that? To discover causation and intervene in its processes to ameliorate suffering – this is really a kind of scientific endeavour. Remember Buddhism is educational, not evangelical. So, no need to worry that any intelligent Buddhist will try to convert you to Buddhism, though in a way, any educator is always trying to convert the student to develop their own ability to think critically, to develop their intelligence by discarding fettering confusions and fanatic convictions. And here, I am emphasising that it is very important to become more aware of the role Buddhism played in the development of Indian civilisation.

So, we should turn to the topic, what is monasticism? In India, Buddha had a base of eremiticism, in which one found the wandering rishis in the Vedas, usually Brahmins and very powerful thaumaturgies or sorcerers feared by the people. These rishis were somewhat outside the pale, and there are mantras about them. So that base was there in India, whereas in the Chinese economy or the West Asian economy, there was no tolerance of such individuals, they were all but non-existent.

In India, on that eremitic base, Buddha and Mahavira together, that is, the Shramanas, built monasticism, which is coenobitic or communitarian, as in a school, very different from eremeticism. In the Buddhist order, the rule was for the vihara to be seven stones throw from town, because you had to get lunch everyday from the citizens. When you received your lunch, you gave a lecture to that citizen. You could only have one lunch per day, you were not allowed to receive a second lunch for tomorrow and take it home in a sack! So, you had to keep coming back to town, and keep lecturing. It was an institutional step beyond forest hermeticism, it was a suburban institution that made ascetic life much easier. In fact, the Jains complained about the Buddhist monastics, saying that they were too lazy, they lived too near town, they ate too frequently, and that they did not live under trees but adopted shelters. Precisely so, the point of the Buddha's monasticism was to make it much easier for less rugged people to follow *nivritti*, the renunciative path. It attempts to make *nivritti* a mode that women can follow, a gentler path, easier for less courageous people, than the road of those fierce knowledge-seekers who are willing to go and live with the tigers and eat roots and bark of trees. It was a major innovation in civilisation, and I argue that it was radically anti-militaristic and therefore revolutionary in a non-violent way.

Putting this in modern terms, go to George Bush or Prime Minister Vajpayee, ask them for free space in a place like this, free food, exemption from all taxes and military service, and freedom from all social obligations. I do not believe you will receive that freedom. You will not be funded, you will not receive a lifelong fellowship, lifelong free lunches. Protestant culture, in general, is built on the mantra of "no free lunch." At that same time, in ancient Chinese culture, the ascetic Yang Chu, who refused to pull out one hair of his head for the sake of the kingdom, was vilified by Confucius and Mencius. In Iran, Egypt, Greece, there were very few ascetics, and zero tolerance for economically non-productive people. So, the non-conforming, individualistic *nivritti* option was available only in India, because of its relatively much richer economy, which supported its progressiveness as an advancing

civilisation. The monastic institution, therefore, is a very powerful civilising institution behind those twelve hundred major rock-cut monuments. It had a major impact on the Indian civilisation.

In fact, I was amazed to discover when I visited the wonderful Auroville, and the Aurovilleans read me passages from Sri Aurobindo's writings, that he blames on the Shramanas, the ascetics and monastics, the later military weakness of India that made her vulnerable to the two great waves of Western conquests, the Islamic and the Christian. Indeed, one way of reading the *Gita* is to note that Arjuna's desire to alight from his chariot and not engage in the violence of war is very similar to Siddhartha's rejection of un-enlightened family and worldly life, leaving the kingdom and his royal duty in the ascetical quest for perfect enlightenment. When Krishna tells Arjuna he must do his duty as a kshatriya warrior, he is clearly trying to stop the Shramanist impulse toward non-violence, to turn away from the outward battle to engage in the inner battle against ignorance, desire, and hatred. This is clear evidence that the *nivritti* impulse is a major force in Indian civilisation, was considered a problem by the social and religious authorities in many eras, but nevertheless had a major impact. In fact, Aurobindo and Krishna were quite right, in a way. Turning away from military heroism does weaken the nation, weaken the family, makes the individual vulnerable to outer enemies. But paradoxically, this is the path to civilisation, the path to gentleness, patience, self-control, justice, and wisdom, all the civilised qualities. Whoever argues that "civilisation" is to be equated with military prowess? Were the imperial powers "civilised?" Are the "superpowers" today civilised? Is the supposed one sole "superpower" today considered "civilised" by anybody in the world apart from its delusional leaders? No, never! Bullies are not civilised. The gentle, the vulnerable, the meek, the kind, the intelligent are civilised. Was this not the key to India's recent greatness? Gandhi's teaching and movement of non-violence that overthrew a militaristic empire?

This is the great paradox of history. The advanced, the sophisticated, the gentle, are the civilised, and yet they tend to go under the heel of less civilised violent invaders and occupiers. So in the histories of militaristic nations, civilised is considered decadent. Yet now we have reached the end of history. Violence might have been temporarily survival-enhancing. Now it is obvious that it is suicidal. Absolute war today gets down very quickly to weapons of mass destruction. These have proliferated and will continue to do so beyond all control. So violence now shows its true face as survival-destructive. Self-restraint, non-violence, gentleness, justice, kindness, dialogue, intelligence, the civilised qualities are the only hope for humanity as a whole, no matter what the religion or ideology.

But to usher in a global renaissance today, we need to de-construct the mores of world militarism. We need schools for self-restraint and gentleness, boot-camps for the battle of self-conquest. We need monasticism and its disciplines to become accessible to the masses, to help them in the form of secular educational curricula, disciplines of behaviour, mind, and intellect, the three *adhishikshani*. Monastic discipline involves walking through town while holding one's body in a certain posture, with one's eyes focused on the ground

about an axle-length ahead of one's body. One speaks in a certain way, one refrains from certain behaviours, one sits in a certain way. Monasticism involves a rich behaviour code, with, for example, eighteen different infractions in the *Vinaya* regarding different modes of slurping! One should not slurp, one should not go "plah plah plah, plu plu plu, sli sli sli, shur, shir, sher!" – actually, eighteen different variants of these, perhaps first onomatopoetic words in the Indic languages. In this way, many slobbering people can be re-trained to eat delicately because they find themselves living in a highly meditative, mindful awareness in which slurping irritates one's neighbour.

So, you have created an institution into which thousands and tens of thousands of people can enter, not only Buddhists, but Jains and Ajivakas, not only men but women too, and you have changed their entire etiquette and way of relating. You have re-oriented these people toward a more inward focus, toward the practice of restraining their own mind, not harming others, trying to do good, all of which Buddha taught. You have created an institution such as that, which grows exponentially from Buddha's time to Ashoka's time, when Ashoka simply refers to the group as the *sangha*. Even people argued that maybe he did not mean the Buddhists per se, maybe he meant by *sangha* a more general group of ascetics – maybe he simply meant the Shramanists – but, really, it does not matter. The point is, that this institution became established and widespread, and this resulted in nine hundred of the twelve hundred major rock-cut monuments. We are talking about a very powerful social force in Indian history, social and intellectual force.

I will close with a personal story. I was a Buddhist monk for some years, and I did indeed learn to wash dishes more carefully and slurp less, even though I had a New York-style upbringing before that. Then I ceased to be a Buddhist monk. I resigned as a Buddhist monk, and I adopted a theory, like a sociological theory that most American Buddhists today have, that we do not need monks, that it is an old-fashioned institution, useless, etc., while everybody instead should be more "non-dual," more socially engaged as a householder. I thought that this new theory was a great breakthrough, a profound insight (though it was really rationalising my own inability to remain a monk!). However, eventually, by learning more as a graduate student and teaching in a secular Department of Religion, I discovered that such a total disregard for the monastic institution and its role represents a Protestant prejudice and suspicion of monastics that very much permeates American culture.

Then, in the 1980s or late 1970s, a sociologist from Columbia challenged me about the peace movement in America. To paraphrase, he said:

> "Peace movement! Don't tell me about the peace movement! There's no peace movement in America. A few people will go protest and surround the Pentagon when it is really extreme, the behaviours of the Rumsfelds and Weinbergers and the Bushes, all the lunatics that have run this country and still do. Even now, they won't go to their office for a day because there are some flower children there or something, and in the Central Park, there are half a million people or a million people that the press under-reports. And then you go home, and you have a job, and then the war movement goes back to its jobs and

> has hundreds of thousands of high-paying technical jobs in factories, building rockets and missiles. And the Pentagon, they go back to their jobs. So peace movement, forget it! Where's the institutional base of the peace movement?"

So I started thinking, "Where is it?" And I looked all over. It is not to be found in our universities. Our scientists with their large grants, they conduct their research at the behest of corporations or the government. The DARPA – Defense something or other – funded the creation of the Internet. To my shock, I discovered that the peace movement is the monastery, which is the only institutional base for the individual in world history that stands out against the militaristic states wherein kings and generals conscript people out of families into wars. The only institution that sometimes provided a base against the militaristic state was the monastery, in whichever culture to which it spread, regardless of whether it were Buddhist or Jain or Christian. The Muslim movements never had any monastic institutions, and the Protestant movement in Christianity was based on the abolition of Catholic monasticism – which says something very significant about the militaristic history of those two movements. Even the Hindus did not really have monasteries, except in the ashrama context of the *brahmachari* student, until after the Buddhists were wiped out and the Hindus began to create them. And most of those monastic establishments are built on the ruins of previous Buddhist monastic establishments. The point of all this about monasticism is just that, as we know today, for the survival of life on earth, are facing the great educational task of re-conditioning individuals to reject militarism and violence and demilitarise all the superpower cultures and societies, in doing this we need the help of the most successful "mass monastic" societies in history, that of classical India and in the modern period the Tibetans and Mongolians. We need, not their religions, but their educational disciplines of *shila*, samadhi, and *prajna*.

Now, the anecdote I have just mentioned relates to a question I like to ask Indian American audiences, or Indian audiences, whenever I give a talk in an Indian university or some place like that, namely, "Who is the most famous Indian in world history?" Nobody ever says, "Shakyamuni Buddha." Do they think he was a Nepali? The guy needs naturalisation! He needs an honorary passport at this point! Why is it that Indian people, culturally, historically, given the way their historiography has been transcribed, cannot own this major aspect of their history? This is the question I pose to you. What is the major intellectual export of India over its long global history? Buddhism! There's no competition! Magnificent as it is, with its karma-, *jnana-*, and *bhakti-yogas*, you don't find the *Bhagavadgita* recited in Japan. You do find this-and-that Buddhist *sutra*.

Today, Buddhist Studies in India is more or less only Pali studies. There is not much study of the *Mahayana*, nor is there much study of Tibetan, or recovery of the thousands of lost Sanskrit works collected in the Tibetan Kanjur and Tanjur canons. Actually, I was commissioned by my Mongolian original guru to translate the Tanjur into English. Samdhong Rinpoche initiated the great project at the Central Institute of Higher Tibetan Studies in Sarnath of translating Tanjur works long lost in

Sanskrit, back into Sanskrit and into Hindi and other Indic languages. There are thousands of these texts, and this is a very important undertaking for Indian education and culture.

It was a shattering thing to introduce the Buddha-concept that the meaning and the value of human life is such that a human individual has a prime duty to himself or herself to try to become enlightened, that it is a greater duty to attempt to achieve moksha, that it is greater than one's duties to family, kingdom, ancestors, and culture. This is a shocking thing to introduce into any culture. If one examines the history of the transmission of this idea, it never entered any country without a wrench, and then, once it was a part of a country, it never failed to have a major impact socially on that country. However, it always remained in tension with the tribal level in that country, which therefore explains why Buddhism has not been revived in India until the twentieth century.

Yet such a transcendentalist impulse is essential to the global renaissance we need to create today, in order to survive the imminent planetary self-destruction threatening us all by universal militarism, infinite war, infinite terrorism and counter-terrorism. Mutual Assured Destruction is assured destruction. We need to shift from MAD to MUD, to Mutual Unilateral Disarmament. To succeed in that we need the *shila*, the samadhi, and the *prajna* wisdom, of the Indic religions, sciences, and arts. The Buddhist streams of those have long been lost in their motherland but are available and have returned thanks to the Tibetans. We need them back, India needs them back, the world needs them back, to put them back to use in education and in society.

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essay

Loss, Recovery and Renewal of Texts in Indian Traditions

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THROUGH THE SCIENCES THAT were the earliest to develop in India – phonetics, *vyakarana* (grammar), *nirvachana* (etymology), *mimamsa* (textual analysis) – and through *patha* (the systems of text-permutations) and *shastra paddhati* (interpretation of meaning), India has maintained its knowledge texts for almost five thousand years, if not more. The *Rig Veda* is the oldest extant Indo-European poetry and the Brahmanas are the oldest Indo-European prose. Evidently, the community attached great value to knowledge and made enormous intellectual effort not only to possess these as relics, but also to comprehend the texts that embodied the knowledge. Though there are records of the "texts," the knowledge has been "lost" more than once – they disappeared or got fragmented and dispersed, or became opaque because their tradition of learning was terminated. The text-internal dynamics (change in language over time, for example) and text-external circumstances (war or natural calamities or invasions) disrupted the tradition and rendered the texts inaccessible, incomprehensible or incoherent. It is also recorded that the community assiduously sought to recover and/or renew these seminal texts and developed a number of mechanisms for the purpose over a period of time, such as re-enunciation, recension, redaction, adaptation, translation, commentary, popular exposition and recreation. There have been several cycles of loss and recovery and these are embodied in what the tradition calls the *Vyasa parampara*. The last cycle, we posit (for the tradition has yet to incorporate a record of this cycle) began in and around the eleventh century, when under the impact of waves of invasions, the tradition of learning broke up, texts got dispersed, fragmented, lost, and the Indian knowledge systems became esoteric and almost dried up. The processes of reconstruction and renewal of texts/knowledge began in the "modern" times (eighteenth century onwards), outside India, in Europe. The history of reconstruction

and dissemination of the classical Indian (Sanskrit, Pali, Prakrit) intellectual tradition in the last two hundred years or so is truly an example of a successful *vishwa yajna* (global effort) to maintain and sustain what is, in fact, the heritage of mankind. Reconstructed Indian thought has influenced and shaped much contemporary thinking. All the major European minds of the nineteenth century, Humboldt, Fichte, Hegel, Goethe, Schopenhauer, Kant, Nietzsche, Schiller, Schelling, de Saussure, Roman Jakobson, Trubetzkoy, were either Sanskritists or, of their own admission, deeply involved in Indian thought. Their work has inspired various thought movements – Idealism, Romanticism, among others – which have shaped the contemporary mind. For example, Structuralism owes much to the work of de Saussure who was a professor of Sanskrit at Geneva before he came over to Sorbonne. And Structuralism today underpins what are virtually global thought-movements right up to post-Modernism. A large number of Indian texts have become available across cultures through translations and these have enabled and strengthened Indian studies. However, the diffusion and dissemination of texts and their "modern" study has created a new challenge for the Indian scholar, to defend the tradition and his "traditional" reading of the texts. Knowledge formation, storage and dissemination in the oral tradition is radically different from that in the scriptural/written traditions and it has monumental intellectual achievements to its credit. It needs to be defended and sustained. We take a look at what motivates these processes and mechanisms of continuity, indeed, at what they are and what they have achieved.

I

What does the "continuity" of a civilisation imply? We ask this question because the "continuity" of Indian civilisation is etched in the public cognition and enshrined in the folk vocabulary. Pundit Bhagvata Sastri-ji of Pune once used the metaphor of a river for this knowledge-centred civilisation – *bharatīya jñāna paramparā sanātana Gangā pravāha*, which means that the Indian knowledge tradition is timeless and continuous like the flow of the river Ganga.[1] *Sanatana* (age-old/ancient/ timeless) and *shashvata* (given, unchanging, always true) are, in fact, the two almost fixed adjectives for this *sanskriti* (culture) in the ordinary speech of the people. The "continuity," therefore, is the continuity of thought and of the texts that embody that thought and "tradition" is the mechanism of transfer of ideas from one generation to the other.

Knowledge has always enjoyed a primary, privileged status in India. It is to be noted that culture is understood here as *tantra* (a set of systems or "grammars") on which various institutions of a society are founded. Indian culture has, for example, systems/ grammars, of dance, language, music, polity, ethics, arts, crafts, painting, sculpture, literature, etc. These systems are expressed in compositions, and texts, and the whole network of these systems and texts constitutes the knowledge or culture of that community and may be cumulatively referred to as Indian knowledge systems.

The sheer amount of knowledge-

[1] At a lecture in the Department of Sanskrit, Sagar University, Sagar, 1995.

literature, texts of knowledge, available in Sanskrit is amazing.[2] The tradition has several knowledge typologies for this large body of literature, in order to classify and arrange these compositions in a hierarchy of validity according to their status as discourses of valid knowledge. There is, therefore, a range of knowledge discourses with relative validity and no one discourse of knowledge. All rational discourses are placed on different clines of validity and all compositions are classified into categories intermediate between those that have "contingent" knowledge and those that contain "non-contingent" knowledge. There is, for example, the fundamental division between *shastra* and *kavya*. In such typologies, the Vedas are assumed to be repositories of "non-contingent" knowledge, knowledge that is independent of time, place and person, the kind of knowledge that is coded in the laws of science. We have the other well-known three-fold division of all v*anmaya*, verbal discourse, into *shruti-smriti-kavya*. *Shruti* is directly apprehended knowledge, totally non-contingent. This covers the Vedas and the Upanishads – texts that handle metaphysical questions. *Smriti* is next in degree – it is non-contingent knowledge but one that is recalled and therefore has the intervention of a thinker. This applies to the primary texts of philosophy and the six auxiliary sciences. *Kavya* is knowledge that is contingent on an individual, their particular perception and their location in time and space. Panini (seventh century BC), the celebrated grammarian, sets up a five-fold typology – *drishta*, *prokta*, *upajnata*, *vyakhyana* and *kavya*. He substitutes *drishta* (grasped by visual perception) for *shruti* (grasped by aural perception) and divides *smriti* into two categories, *prokta* (restated by some one else) and *upajnata* (found/constituted again). This division distinguishes between say *Nyayasutra* of Gautama and *Ashtadhyayi* of Panini, which is itself a re-formulation and extension of the knowledge available in the long line of earlier grammarians. He adds a new category, *vyakhyana* (commentary), which establishes the importance of this kind of "renewal" literature in the Indian intellectual tradition. There is also a clear opposition made, as we have noted above, between *shastra* (knowledge/texts) and *kavya* (imaginative/literary texts).

It is also to be noted that contrary to the popular impression, knowledge in India has not been confined to learned texts, nor has it ever been, a repository of the few. Along with the learned, scholarly tradition, there has always been a parallel *katha*, *pravachana parampara* (popular tradition of narration and exposition of texts), which has throughout mediated between the learned tradition and the ordinary masses. Even Adi Shankaracharya, one of the greatest minds, besides having composed numerous intellectual texts,

[2] We get some idea of this from the fact that despite losses due to calamities and vandalism, more than a million Sanskrit manuscripts are still in existence. They are sometimes preserved carefully, as is the case with European collections, but more often they are just stockpiled and stored in private collections and public libraries, with a large number of them not even catalogued yet. The Sanskrit word for literature is *vanmaya*, compositions in words/language. The primary texts in this *vanmaya* span a large number of disciplines – philosophy, medicine, grammar, architecture, geography, literary theory, political economy, logic, astronomy and mathematics, biology, military science, sociology, metallurgy, agriculture, mining, ship-building, veterinary science and commerce besides the sixty-four arts and crafts that are conventionally enumerated and include, for example, sculpting, bangle-making, etc.

was also a *pravachanakara* (a popular expounder), who travelled through the length and breadth of India addressing village congregations, explaining and sharing with them his understanding of Advaita Vedanta.[3] In fact, there is strong reason to believe that Shankara's learned commentaries originated in his popular discourses. Similarly, Sri Ramanujacharya expounded his Vishishtadvaita philosophy for twelve years in Tamil, the people's language, in the village of Melkote near Mysore.

In the learned texts, *drishtanta* (illustrations) and *upama* (analogies), borrowed from the day to day activities and ordinary lives of the people, such as from the sphere of *shringar* (ornamentation), cooking, family relationships and obligations, as well as activities such as digging wells, etc., abound. In the five-step syllogism, the third step is *udaharanam*, a real life example, the applied example "... characteristic of India's practical outlook and its practical conception of proof ..." (Heimann 86-87). Both these attest the fact that in India, knowledge is not a privileged discourse, nor a discourse of the privileged. And what decisively attests to the non-esoteric and non-elitist nature of knowledge, and above all, to its continuity, is the fact that what was once the learned vocabulary of Indian thought is today a part of the ordinary language of the people. Trans-disciplinary philosophical terms such as *jada, chetana, jiva, atman, samsara, dhyana, kshama, daya, maitri, karuna, anu, jnana, jnani, chitta, buddhi, pratyaksha* continue to be present in almost all Indian languages and, what is more significant, are present as ordinary words in the speech of the people. Not only terms of philosophy, even technical terms of grammar, *sanjnas*, such as *vriddhi* and *guna*, are high frequency words in the ordinary speech of people of almost all Indian languages. Even the conceptual propositions[4] are a part of the ordinary thinking of the people as maxims. It is not just a question of words or clauses being present, it is a matter of ideas permeating and continuing to be alive. It is also an example of what can be unequivocally termed the true democratisation of thought in India. This democratisation makes the possession of right knowledge[5] a civilisational value in India.

Thus great value has always been attached to knowledge, and tremendous intellectual effort has gone into maintaining the texts of knowledge. As

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[3] In a personal conversation with Sri Shankaracharya of Sharda Peetha, Sringeri, it was confirmed that, in the seventh century, apart from the fact that Sanskrit was a very widely understood language, the Indian speech community was covered by five Prakrits, and that Sri Adi Shankaracharya gave his discourses in Prakrit followed later by his compositions in Sanskrit, the pan-Indian language of learning.

[4] such as "... death is certain for the born" (*Bhagavadgita* 2.27).

[5] As we have said elsewhere,

> The goal of knowledge in the Indian tradition therefore is so very different – it is to promote the freedom of the individual. Of course, what constitutes "freedom of the Individual" in our thought has to be clearly understood.... For true individual freedom, the only goal has to be *moksha*. So the individual seeks/pursues his *moksha*. But the instrument or means of *moksha* is Knowledge. But what Knowledge? That which promotes dharma, which is defined in the *Mahabharata* as that which promotes the general welfare of mankind. So the individual has to seek knowledge that promotes what the *Bhagavadgita* calls *loka-samgraha*, the collective well-being. Knowledge informed by dharma binds the individual and the society. (Kapoor,"Knowledge, Individual and Society in the Indian Tradition")

has been noted elsewhere[6] even though Hindu culture is not bibliolatorous, it has accorded a special status to certain texts, the texts of knowledge, and made them perennial objects of study. The difference, however, is that there has been a complete freedom to come up with numerous, even competing, interpretations. A distinction therefore has to be made between the conformist, undifferentiated study of a single sacred text and a freely interpretive study of an intellectually important text (such as *the Rig Veda*) that generates a multiplicity of what are often the contending interpretations.[7] *Shruti* and *Smriti* texts, as texts of knowledge, have been objects of perennial study. The two dominant metaphors for these texts are,

(i) *kamadhenu*, and
(ii) *kalpavriksha*.

The first metaphor suggests that they are sources of endless knowledge, and the second that they yield the desired fruit, whatever is the *ishta*, conducive to the happiness of the community/individual.

But it has not been simple, this successful maintenance of texts. Various processes have been involved in this – loss, recovery and renewal. Some texts, many in fact, have quite possibly been irretrievably lost. A text is lost when it

(i) gets dispersed and portions of the text become unavailable for the time being
(ii) grows asymmetrical with new known facts and so ceases to be relevant or grows outmoded, that is obsolete or anachronistic, and
(iii) becomes opaque and no longer makes sense.

The Indian tradition records repeated loss and recovery of its seminal cultural texts. Even in known/written history we can observe the operation of both, loss, and, of various text-recovery/renewal mechanisms. Renewal needs to be understood as a different process, one that in the course of recovery or maintenance involves extension or deepening of the thought. These processes deserve to be studied though the evidence is scarce and culture-specific.

It has been earlier affirmed that culture is a *tantra* or a set of systems or "grammars." These systems, with the passage of time, may, due to various factors, be lost. Thus when a text grows asymmetrical[8] with what it seeks to explain and loses its relevance and position as a primary text in a given domain of knowledge, it may get dropped.[9] Or, through a sudden external event or process, texts (and their knowledge) may be physically destroyed or lost (as would happen, for example, in case of a Great War or upheaval such as the *Mahabharata*, in which even great grammarians were made to drive chariots).

However, dynamic communities do not allow their systems of thought to die. A civilisation such as India's, that puts a premium on knowledge, would strive and develop techniques for maintaining its texts. As has been described elsewhere[10] oral cultures have

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[6] See Kapil Kapoor, "Some Reflections on the Interpretation of Texts in the Indian Tradition."

[7] Bhartrihari says, "Monism, Dualism and any number of points of view (*pravādā bahudhā mata*), all equally valid, are all rooted in and argued from the Veda" (*Vakyapadiya*1.8).

[8] As would be the case of a book dealing with medicinal plants which have since become extinct.

[9] Particularly in the oral tradition, where texts occupy space in the mind and that space has to be economically used and according to priorities.

in-built mechanisms for the recovery of texts. As it is, strong cultures resist both kinds of loss – those due to the text-internal factors and those due to the text-external, contextual factors – to preserve culturally central systems of ideas. A culture may, therefore, employ one or any of the following seven text maintenance/renewal mechanisms to keep the thought alive and re-contextualised:

(i) **commentary** such as Katyayana's *Vartika*, 350 BC; Patanjali's *Mahabhashya* second century BC; *Kashika* AD seventh century and Shankara's *Bhashya*;

(ii) **recension** (a critical revision) such as *Chandra Vyakarana*, AD fourth century, a Buddhist recension of the *Ashtadhyayi* that interestingly eschews what it believes to be its philosophically loaded technical vocabulary; *Jainendra Vvyakarana/ Shabdanushasana*, composed in AD fifth century by Devanandin or Siddhanandin), and *Ashtavakra Gita*;

(iii) **redaction** (a re-arrangement) such as *Rupamala* of Vimala Saraswati, *Siddhanta Kaumudi* of Bhattojidikshita, AD sixteenth century and *Laghusiddhanta Kaumudi* of Varadaraja, AD eighteenth century;

(iv) **adaptations**: *Hemashabdanushasana* by Hemachandracharya, AD eleventh century, an adaptation of Panini's grammar to describe Prakrit, contemporary spoken Prakrits, or Shankaradev's Assamese adaptation of Valmiki *Ramayana*, and such other adaptations in almost all the Indian languages from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries onwards;

(v) **translation**: for example, the many translations of major literary and philosophical texts in almost all the modern Indian languages from roughly the fourteenth century onwards; Hindi paraphrase of *Ashtadhyayi* by Shri Narayan Misra and the English translation of the text with incorporations from *Kashika* by Sri S. C. Vasu, 1898;

(vi) **popular exposition**: the *katha*, *pravachana parampara*, a hoary tradition, has been chiefly instrumental in both the maintenance and renewal of texts of thought.[11] The two parallel traditions, the learned and the popular have been present throughout, and even today are mutually enriching each other and contributing in equal measure to the development of thought, through processes of paraphrase, explication, verification, falsification, illustration, etc.;

(vii) **re-creation:** The *Mahabharata*, for example, is in addition maintained by repeated creative use of its themes and episodes. Recreations based on the *Mahabharata* date back to the ancient Sanskrit playwright Bhasa, who wrote a number of plays on epic characters and episodes including his portrayal of the

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[10] See Kapil Kapoor, "*Vyasa Parampara*, Text Renewal Mechanisms, Max Mueller and European Scholarship" 117-35. The discussion of the "Recovery" process here in section II is based on this paper. But I make a distinction in this paper between "Recovery" and "Renewal" mechanisms.

[11] This *katha, pravachana parampara* continues to be vigorous and alive even today, with many distinguished expounders of Upanishads, Vedanta, *Bhagavadgita* and *Ramayana* drawing huge crowds in their live discourses and having millions of devoted followers across the country. Sri Asa Ram-ji Bapu and Sri Murari Bapu are just two examples. Their discourses are learned but *sarasa* and in the functional mode laid down by the *Natyashastra* they make profound thought accessible to the people.

dilemma of Karna in his play *Karnabhara*. Another powerful attempt at recreation of the themes and characters of the epic is seen in the stage performances of Kathakali in Kerala. Modern Indian literature has been lately flooded with re-tellings of the epic. In the Malayalam novel, *Anuyatra* by S. K. Marar, Kunti is portrayed as suffering like the "Mother Earth" herself. Shivaji Sawant's *Mrityunjaya* discusses Karna's ethical predicament. This Marathi novel glorifies Karna and justifies his actions through a psychological framework. Another Malayalam novel, *And Now Let Me Sleep*, by P. K. Balakrishnan also attempts to see Karna as a person suffering from a grave identity crisis. A very notable re-telling of the *Mahabharata* is the English novel by Shashi Tharoor, *The Great Indian Novel*. Tharoor borrows the structure of the epic, employs the technique of subversion and parodies the general schema. The various re-tellings show that the great epic is renewed through re-interpretation and re-contextualisation. All these renewals restore the dynamics of a text that may otherwise lose its vitality. In this they align with commentary or the *tika* mode.

II

How is the loss due to external conditions handled? This "external process" is a very complex phenomenon and has several articulations. For example, when the Nalanda library was burnt, some Buddhist *bhikhus* (monks) fled to Tibet with whatever texts they could take with them. (The library's massive collection, it is said, burnt for months; so only a small fraction could have been saved.)

Many texts were irretrievably lost. One text, Dignaga's *Pramanasamucchaya*, has an interesting and representative history of recovery. In 1968, Masaaki Hattori translated, annotated and published the section on perception, the *pratyakshapariccheda*, from the Sanskrit fragments and the Tibetan versions. In 1987, Richard P. Hayes, published an English translation from Kanakavarman's Tibetan translation and Vasudharakshita's translation of the text. He prepared explanatory notes on the basis of the *tika* (sub-commentary) by Jinendrabuddhi (also known as Jitendrabudhi, AD eighth century). Jinendrabuddhi's sub-commentary is more useful as a guide to Dignaga's thought as it offers an explanation of nearly every phrase in *Pramanasamucchaya*, both for the verses and the prose auto-commentary. Further Hayes notes in his introduction:

> To all of the passages translated I have added my own commentary, which not only contains information on how Dignaga's arguments were interpreted by such philosophers as Uddyotkara, Jayamisra, Parthasarthimisra and Jinendrabuddhi, but also ventures occasionally to express the line of argument used by the Indians in a way intended to make them a little more acceptable to modern readers. (Hayes 223)

The *Pramanasamucchaya* text has had an interesting history in Tibet where it was taken by the monks. The Sanskrit original is no longer available but three Tibetan translations were made from the original. Burston records that a pundit by the name of Chandrarahula was invited to Tibet and that he and the Tibetan translator Ting nge dzin Bzang

Po translated *Pramanasamucchaya* and other works in the middle part of the eleventh century. The second of the two surviving translations of the *Pramanasamucchaya* was done by the Tibetan scholar Dad pai shes rab in collaboration with an Indian Pundit named Kanakavarmana (Kser kyi go ch). Kanakavarmana's translation of Dignaga's work is, generally speaking, clearer than the translation by Vasudharakshita and Zha ma seng ge and more in line with the grammatical analysis and philosophical expositions given by Jinendrabuddhi. In cases where a fragment of the original Sanskrit passage has survived, a comparison of this fragment with the two Tibetan translations most often shows that Kanakvarmana's work shows more finesse and accuracy than the other translation.

As for the original text, only the first chapter of the *Pramanasamucchaya* by Dignaga (AD 480-540) is available at the Government Oriental Library, Mysore. This first chapter, *pratyakshapariccheda*, on perception as a means of valid knowledge, consists of forty-eight verses while the total number of verses in this text has been reported to be two hundred and forty-seven. This is an example of the partial recovery of a text in recorded history in an allied cultural tradition at a time when the traditional modes of storing the text in the mind in various permutations had been disrupted. In what is today referred to as "pre-history," it was possible to reconstitute the texts within the tradition and though we have no means to assess the degree of reconstitution, the authenticity of reconstitution is implicitly accepted.[12]

III

The process of recovery of texts has been institutionalised in the tradition as *Vyasa parampara*. *Vyasa parampara* is a record of the recovery of texts. Understanding this involves questions such as the nature of evidence.[13] As mentioned above, we are different from the West in our understanding of notions such as "authenticity," in our sense of time, and in our *itihasa-purana* (modes of recording what happened/what is likely to happen). It is enshrined in the *Mahabharata* and in the different Puranas that in India's long tradition, the central codes (Vedas, contingent *vanmaya* and *Vidyas*) were lost and re-constituted or enounced anew at least thirty times, and then renewed and subsequently elaborated. For the latter, we have the attested example of *Ashtadhyayi*, and for the former, we have cited the example of *Pramanasamucchaya*, a culturally central code of Buddhist epistemology. Many Western scholars would discount these formulations given their assumptions and their methodology for in no other tradition do we have such efforts at reconstituting and renewal. But

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[12] We are referring to the elaborate and complex *patha-tradition* which analysed and re-organised texts in various permutations and combinations which when stored in the mind in different arrangements/combinations ensured accurate re-construction of the texts even when, and if, all the exteriorised, written versions were to be destroyed. The texts have been maintained intact and uncorrupted through intricate techniques of mental storage and oral transference.

[13] We rely on Purana narratives. It is said that Purana narratives are metaphorical, not literal. But on that count we cannot reject their evidence. *Mimamsasutra* clearly says that *rupaka* is the mode of statement in the Vedas and goes on to interpret, to attribute, content to them. Further to call thirty different rishis, scholars, the same nomenclature, Vyasa, is itself an act of metaphoricisation.

in the case of the Indian tradition even those belonging to other traditions have worked assiduously to reconstruct texts and renew them, as, for example, the German and French scholars did in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries with the Sanskrit texts.

An Indian scholar, Dr. Kunwarlal Vyasashishya, has pointed out,

> Western writers do not even accept the existence of Parasharya Vyasa [the author of the *Mahabharata*], so what value can they attach to the twenty-nine Vyasas who preceded him? Today, Parasharya Vyasa is the source of *Vedavanmaya* [the entire body of Vedic literature. By rejecting the existence of Vedavyasa] the western writers have dug up the very root of authentic Indian history just as Kautilya had dug up the very root of the Nanda dynasty. But the roots of Indian *itihasa* go into the very *patala* [the netherworld] ... and so they have not succeeded in plucking them out completely... So the famous Purana scholar, Pargiter, though unable to grasp the whole truth, did apprehend the truth that Vyasa enounced the texts before the *Mahabharata* war. (35, 37; my translation)[14]

Far beyond the limited chronology of the West, Vedic literature has existed in India since time immemorial. Moreover, it has been, for various reasons, repeatedly in need of re-statement, re-constitution, defence. It has happened thirty times. The span of time over which it has happened need not concern us here, as it is not pertinent. What is pertinent is the phenomenon of loss and recovery through restatement or reconstitution. We know for example from the *Mahabharata* text itself that it was constituted in Janamejaya's *naga-yajna* at the Nigamabodhaghata, a tell-tale name, of the then Indraprastha, modern Delhi. This was obviously an assembly of the learned, convened by Janamejaya to reconstitute texts that were lost in the great convulsion, with the purpose of recovering the Nigama texts.

We must comment on the nature and the cause of loss. As Max Mueller has noted[15] texts in the oral tradition are stored and maintained in the memory.[16] This mode assumes an ordered, stable society. If there is a major disturbance, such as the long twelve-year drought just before the ninth Vyasa (*Mahabharata*, *Shalyaparva*, *adhyaya* 51), the scholars can think of nothing but their very existence and the texts go into the background. Or if there is a war such as the *Mahabharata*, or if there is a massive invasion such as that of the Sakas at the turn of the era or of the Islamic armies in the tenth, eleventh and twelfth centuries of this era.

The scholar we have already cited lists by name the thirty Vyasas (1) on the basis of evidence in the Puranas and the *Mahabharata*, and describes the function they performed. While the earlier Vyasas are credited with the first

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[14] The author quotes Pargiter: "He (Vyasa) would probably have completed that work of Vedic (recension) about a quarter century before the Bharata battle" (Pargiter 318; as ctd. in Vyasashishya 37).

[15] "This may sound startling, but what will sound more startling, and yet is a fact that can be easily ascertained ... at the present moment, if every MS of the *Rigveda* was lost, we should be able to recover the whole of it – from the memory of the *shrotriyas* in India ... Here then we are not dealing with theories, but with facts, which – anybody may verify. The whole of the *Rigveda*, and a great deal exists at the present moment in the oral tradition" (*India: What Can It Teach Us* 131).

[16] Orality, as a mode of constituting and maintaining knowledge, organises knowledge in the mind, as against the literate traditions in which knowledge is maintained externally, exteriorised with attendant consequences for knowledge formation, storage and dissemination. For some more details, see Kapil Kapoor, "Texts of the Oral Tradition" 27-31.

enunciation of the texts, the ninth, the tenth, the nineteenth, the twenty-fifth and the thirtieth Vyasa are explicitly recognised as those who re-constituted the texts.

Saundarananda, 7 records:

> *Sārasvato yatra suto'asya yajñeya nashṭasya vedasya punaḥ pravaktaḥ*
>
> Sarasvati's son Sarasvata was born, who re-constituted the Vedas that had been lost.

It is also recorded that there was a continuous drought for twelve years and sixty thousand rishis congregated in the Saraswata Ashrama (hermitage), and afflicted by hunger and thirst, they forgot the Vedas. Sarasvata then reconstituted them and taught them again. Ashvaghosha in his *Buddhacharita* again recorded the same fact:

> *Sārasvat cāpi jagād naṣṭaṁ vedaṁ punartha dadrṣṣurnapurve.* (I.42)
>
> At the destruction of the world, Saraswata (rishi) reconstituted/restored the Vedas to their earlier form.

It is noted by the Puranas and Itihasas that *veda-shruti* has been lost or been seized or forgotten several times, and that it has been "rescued" time and again by great minds. For example, it is widely recorded that the *asuras*, Madhu-Kaitabha, had seized the Vedas and Hari (Vishnu) had to rescue the texts.

Harivamsha Purana records a similar conribution of rishi Dattatreya in restoring the Vedas and Vedic sacrificial rituals:

> *Dattātreya ... naṣṭeṣu vedeṣu prakriyāsu makheṣa ca //*
> *Saha yajḷakriyā vedāḥ pratyānī tā hi tena vai //* (*Harivamsha Purana* I.41.4-5, 7)
>
> Dattatreya ... at the destruction of the Vedas and Vedic practices with effort restored both ritual practices and the Vedas.

Vayu Purana also records it with some variation:

> *Tretāyuge tu daśame dattātrayo vabhūva ha/*
> *Naṣṭe dharma chaturthaśca mārkaṇḍeya purassaraḥ /*
>
> In Tretayuga, for the tenth time, when Dharma was destroyed, Markandeya, as a Vyasa, re-constituted the Vedas with the help of Dattatreya.[17]

The names of the Vyasas, from that of the eleventh to that of the thirtieth, are known but details are available only about the nineteenth (Bharadvaja), the twentieth (Vajashrava, the father of Nachiketa), the twenty-fifth (Rikshavalmiki), the twenty-seventh (Parashara), and, of course, the thirtieth Krishnadvaipayana Vedavyasa, the contemporary of Shantanu, whose contribution is acknowledged by Pargiter, as noted above. In many Puranas and in the *Mahabharata* this is acknowledged, viz.,

> *sarvavedavidṁ śreṣṭho vāsaḥ satyvatisutaḥ.* (*Shanti Parva 2.9*)

It is said that the *Vedavanmaya* composed in the earlier ages became disordered and dispersed. Vedavyasa, seeing that human intellectual abilities had declined, put together the essence of all the Veda Samhitas in the form of the four Vedas because of which he came to be called Vyasa (*Adi Parva* 63.87-88).

This entire text-renewal institution of Vyasa needs to be studied as against the needs of those times.

There are thus various functions of this institution of Vyasa, such as re-establishment, recovery and

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[17] It is to be noted that in the early texts and tradition, the term *veda* encompasses not only *Shrutis* but also all Brahmanas and all *Smritis*, and *Vidyas*. Later the term got restricted to *Shruti* texts, at some point of time.

reconstitution, extension (viz., 21 *shakhas* of the *Rig Veda* by the disciples of the Vedavyasa) and propagation. What is of importance is the evident knowledge-centredness of the Indian community. So immense is the value attached to these texts of knowledge (Vedas) that repeated efforts have been made by great minds to keep these texts intact. In this sense, Adi Shankara could also be called a Vyasa as he re-established, re-interpreted and propagated Vedic knowledge after it had been restricted and overshadowed by Buddhist thought for almost one thousand years.

From these narratives, another convention emerges. Such monumental work as the different Vyasas did, could not have been achieved by any one individual – several thinkers must have been involved in what perhaps took the shape of a vigorous intellectual movement. So what the later recorders do is to identify one of them as the leader of that movement, call him Vyasa, and name the several other thinkers who performed limited, specific tasks, as his disciples. This is how Vedavyasa's disciples are known – one of them, Paela, engaged himself with the *Rig Veda* and later twenty-one of his disciples developed the twenty-one schools of the *Rig Veda*. One can trace this kind of intellectual progression and relationship even in the history of the evolution of Advaita. Thus the subsequent thinkers such as Ramanujacharya of Vishishtadvaita would be counted as a *shishya*, (disciple) of the Vyasa – Adi Shankara. And in the same vein, one may recognise the contribution of Yaska, more than fifteen hundred years before Adi Shankara. We know from his *Nirukta* that the Vedic texts had become so opaque with the passage of time that materialist skeptics such as Kautsa, asserted that Vedic mantras were meaningless. Yaska took up the gauntlet, developed the science of *nirvachana* – etymology – restored meanings to the Vedic texts and thus renewed them. He initiated the science of interpretation and came at the head of a line of scholars culminating in Jaimini and his *Mimamsashastra*. He may be attested as the thirty-first Vyasa with Adi-Shankara as the thirty-second.

In this manner time and again, a number of *drishtas*/rishis rescued the Indian knowledge systems from being submerged and destroyed, very much like Lord Vishnu rescued the *gaja* (elephant) from the fatal clutches of the *graha* (crocodile).

IV

Now we come to (i) the availability of the text, (ii) the ability to understand the text, and (iii) the relevance of the text. The continuous and cumulative *tika parampara* (the commentary tradition) ensured all the three – availability, comprehensibility and contextual relevance of the texts.

The commentary tradition is a cumulative tradition, i.e., a number of commentaries on a given text follow each other in succession, with every succeeding commentary taking into account and building on the preceding ones. Almost all the major texts have been cumulatively commented upon.[18]

These commentaries take many forms, from *panjika* (bare annotation) to *mahabhashya* (exhaustive, encyclopedic analysis).[19] What K. A. Subramania Iyer says about the purpose and value of commentaries is true of commentaries in general:

> [These] ... supplied the context and brought out the full implications of the main idea ... [they also explain] the logical sequence [of topics and ideas] ... [handing down the old tradition] was also one of the original motives of those writers ... [they also placed the text in the context of the totality of philosophical systems]. (50-51)

Above all, as Vamana-Jayaditya say in the first *karika* of their *Kashika*:

> The purpose is to bring together and unify the ... knowledge that lies scattered in *vrittis*, *bhashyas* and all *shastras* ...

Thus over a period of time, texts (i) grow opaque, and/or (ii) become asymmetrical with the context, and/or (iii) their connection with the tradition of knowledge in that domain becomes incoherent. If the intellectual texts have not become "dead" and are still studied in the learned, though now relatively esoteric, tradition, it is because the *tika parampara* has kept them alive and pertinent. As we have already noted, some of India's most brilliant minds have been exegetes – Yaska (ninth century BC), Shabaraswamin (AD first century), Kumarila Bhatta (AD sixth century), Adi Shankara (AD seventh century), Sri Ramanuja (AD eleventh century), Madhavacharya (AD thirteenth century), Shayanacharya (AD fourteenth century), Jnaneshwara (AD 1400-1500), right down to "The Great Moderns," Sri Aurobindo, Mahatma Gandhi, Radhakrishnan, Vinoba Bhave (who all wrote commentaries on the *Bhagavadgita* in the illustrious line of Shankara and Ramanuja). As already noted (*Vakyapadiya* 1.8-10), the existence of this continuous, cumulative tradition of interpretation, apart from attesting to society's commitment to knowledge, also attests the freedom of mind that the culture allows the individual to exercise in reaching different, competing and self-validated interpretations/constructs. Freedom to interpret means freedom to think. Above all this tradition ensured continuity of the habits of the mind, of what is called the culture of a community.

Commentary is the major form that *artha-nirdharana* (interpretation), takes in the tradition. The interpreter seeks to establish meaning at the level of *yathartha* (meaning at the apparent level) and at the level of *tattvartha* (significance or purport). As texts can be highly complex even at the surface, we need canons and instruments of interpretation. Faced with transparent, discontinuous, repetitive, contradictory, tautological, implausible, non-coherent, apparently meaningless texts, Indian exegetes developed, over long stretches

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[18] For example, the commentaries, *tika*, on Jaimini's *Mimamsasutra*: *Shabarabhashya* (AD first century?); Kumarila Bhatta's *Shlokavartika* and *Tantravartika* (AD sixth century/seventh century?) commentaries on *Shabarabhashya*; Prabhakara Misra's commentary on *Shabarabhashya*, *Brihati* (AD seventh century?); Shalikanatha's commentary on *Brihati*, *Rjuvimala* (AD ninth century); Parthasarthy Misra's *Shastradipika* (AD fourteenth century?); Madhavacharya's *Nyayamala* (AD fourteenth/fifteenth century); Appayadikshita's *Upakramaparakrama*, Apodeva's *Mimamsanyayaprakasha*, Khandadeva's *Mimamsakaustubha*, Gagabhatta's *Bhattachintamani*, Narayana Bhatta's *Manamyodya* all in the seventeenth century; Krishnayajavana's *Mimamsaparibhasha* (AD eighteenth century). The commentary literature is indeed endless; we have mentioned here only those that are most frequently cited and discussed. Indeed there are indeed commentaries on these commentaries (which is what makes the tradition "interlaced"), such as the two major *Shlokavartika* commentaries, *Kashika* by Sucharita Misra and *Nyayaratnakara* by Parthasarthi Mishra, the *Tantravartika* commentaries, *Nyayasudha* by Someshvara Bhatta, and *Tauttatitamatatilaka* by Bhavedeva Bhatta, to mention only two. (For a complete list, see Ganganatha Jha's introduction to his translation of *Shlokavartika*.)

[19] Rajashekhara, in his *Kavyamimamsa* (AD ninth century) in chapter 1, lists eight forms.

of time, a system of interpretation that employed the following ten strategies or instruments of exegesis:

A. *shabda pramana* (verbal testimony) – *shruti, darshana, itihasa-purana, jnana mimamsa* (established epistemologies, perception, inference, etc.)
B. *sarvabhauma siddhanta*, major assumption of text-domain
C. *sangati* (coherence), *paribhasha nyaya* (meta-rules; rules of interpretation), *laukika nyaya* (judgements employed in ordinary life), *vyakarana* (grammar)
D. *nirvachana* (etymology; exposition of word meaning), *shabdashakti* (theories of meaning, including *dhvani*, [suggestion] and *lakshana vritti* [figurative meaning]).

It is instructive to study the great exegetes and see how they employ these instruments of interpretation and how they differ from each other in their preferred instruments. For example, while Sri Ramanuja dominantly uses verbal testimony in his *Gita Bhashya*, Sri Shankara's dominant epistemology is inference.[20] In his commentary on the second chapter of the *Gita*, his argument is presented in the given *vada* tradition – the *purvapaksha* (the opponent's point of view) is presented first, and then controverted, and finally the *sva-siddhanta* is argued. Adi Shankara employs all the instruments of interpretation in an exposition that displays a concentric enlargement of the argument built around the one key word, *ashochya* (un- or non-mournable).

In this part of his commentary Sri Shankara achieves a remarkable reconciliation of what had been posited since the Upanishads as the three contending means of moksha (liberation) – *jnana* (knowledge), karma (action) and *bhakti* (devotion). The *Bhagavadgita* is important in the Indian history of ideas because it investigates the cause of suffering in relation to a real life situation, a drastic situation that involves the issues of killing and/or getting killed and also one that epitomises all the dilemmas that a person may encounter in this life. The great sage Vyasa examines this question and to give it authority makes Lord Krishna the spokesman. Adi Shankara's seminal commentary articulates and establishes Lord Krishna's *siddhanta* for attaining moksha (freedom from suffering): *nishkama karma* (unattached action) leads to *chitta shuddhi* (the purification of the self), which leads to *vairagya* (wise indifference), which leads to *viveka* (discriminating faculty), which leads to *vishuddha jnana* (pure knowledge) which then leads to moksha (freedom from suffering).

The commentary tradition remained alive, though restricted, even in the period of great disruption following the eleventh century.

V

Owing to the upheavals in Indian history in the eleventh century and the vandalism that followed, Indian learning/knowledge got excluded, suffered, dispersed. It went "underground," with some families of scholars secretly continuing to engage with particular parts and portions of this body of knowledge. The Bhattojidikshita family of Varanasi, for example, in the

[20] For a detailed statement of Sri Shankara's method in his commentary on the *Gita*, chapter 2, see Kapil Kapoor, "Some Reflections" 264-71.

sixteenth-seventeenth centuries took upon itself the task of maintaining *vyakarana* texts at great risk and in penury. Gradually the whole education system came to be disrupted, various schools disappeared one by one, and new objects of knowledge replaced this traditional knowledge.

The process continued with the British period. Dr. Bhattacharya has described the state of affairs and the attitude of Indians to their own learning:

> The introduction of English as the medium of instruction and the establishment of a large number of schools and colleges on the Western style led to the virtual closure of … Tols and Patthashalas … After the quelling of the Mutiny a feeling of desperation took possession of the Indian mind. It was feared that the old Indian literature, old Indian culture, old Indian sciences and arts … would perish at no distant future. Manuscripts were perishing in heaps in the houses of Pandits or were being carried to all parts of Europe … A Pandit in the early years of the 19th century considered his manuscripts to be his best treasures … His son who had learnt A B C … saw no good in the manuscripts and removed them from the best room of his house, first to the kitchen … The housewife … took the wooden-board covers and utilized them for fuel. The leaves got intermixed for want of board and string [and] in the course of a year or so were thrown to the kitchen garden to rot…." (54-55)

The situation of ignorance came to such a pass that we could no longer read Ashoka's inscriptions (Princep had to do it for us), the Nawab of Bhopal offered the Vidisha sculptures to be taken away and had to be told by the British resident that he did not know what he was saying, and Jagat Singh, the general of the Raja of Benaras pulled down the stupa of Sarnath to provide bricks/ materials for the Raja's new palace. As Swami Nirvedananda says:

> … young minds began to swallow queer cultural shibboleths, such as India has no culture worth the name, that her entire past was (one big error best forgotten) a foolish quest after false ideals, that if she wanted to live seriously, she would have to re-mould herself.
>
> Thoroughly in the mould of European civilization, these incantations lulled the self-awareness of the Indians into sleep. (653)

Not just young minds, but India as a people grew ashamed. As noted elsewhere:

> It is perhaps not difficult for us even today to reconstruct the Hindu mood of deep despondency in the last decades of the 19th century … [And then subsequently] Marathas had been defeated in 1818, the Sikhs in 1839, the revolt of the Hindi heartland put down in 1857 … [it was a case of people having lost] their voice … [a case of] subjugation of the discourse – a whole lexis de-invigorated [dropped], rendered meaningless. (Kapoor, "Rebirth of a Language" 100)

We get a glimpse of the psychological state of the people in Swami Vivekananda's address also where he said: "It has been one of the principles of my life not to be ashamed of my ancestors … The more I have studied the past … more and more has this pride come to me." He went on to link this mood to the submerging of India's thought and literature, and referred to the recurrence of this phenomenon and the repeated re-emergence of this thought in India's long history: "Sect after sect arose in India, seeming to shake the religion of the Vedas to its very depths, but like the waters of the sea-shore in a tremendous

earthquake it receded … only to return in an all-absorbing flood…"[21]

VI

It is in this perspective that we have to see the renewal – the recovery and reconstitution – of texts in the modern times from the eighteenth century onwards, due to the "happy" accident of the British rule in India. It is the European scholars, particularly the Germans, who set in motion the process of recovery – of both the texts and the self-respect of the people.

It is not out of place to note chronologically the work of major contributors here as recorded by Dr. Bhattacharya (52-54). Warren Hastings, nominated Governor General of India in 1773, commissioned the first law-book compiled by Sanskrit scholars. This was published subsequently, in 1776, in English translation as *A Code of Gentoo Law*. Later Charles Wilkins translated the *Bhagavadgita* and *Hitopadesha* into English. However, for really opening Indian literature to Europe credit goes, as is well-known, to Sir William Jones who founded the Asiatic Society, which printed editions of numerous Indian texts in a series known as Bibliotheca Indica. He himself translated *Shakuntala* and *Manusmriti* into English. Colebrooke continued this work and initiated Indian philology. He introduced the *Rig Veda* to Europe in 1805. H. H. Wilson next translated the *Rig Veda*. Alexander Hamilton, another Englishman, learnt Sanskrit. On his way back from India he was detained in Paris. There, Fredrich Schlegel the German scholar learnt that language from him and published his studies in German. His talented brother followed him and became the first professor of Sanskrit in Germany and settled in Bonn in 1818. Franz Bopp was a contemporary of Schlegel and became the founder of the new science of Comparative Philology.

Sanskrit studies grew more and more influential in Europe and a large number of scholars took to Sanskrit studies. Some of those who made significant contributions, apart from Max Mueller, are – Roth, Burnouf, Aufrecht, Lassen, Böhtlingk, Weber, Senart, Sylvain Levi, Foucher, and others. The long line ends in such giants at the turn of the twentieth century as Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of structuralism, who was a professor of Sanskrit at Geneva, had done his doctorate on the genitive case in Sanskrit and published papers in the area of Sanskrit poetics and metres; Roman Jakobson, the formalist, linguist and literary theorist who worked on Vedic mythology; and Trubetzkoy, the structural phonologist who had worked on the *Rig Veda* for his doctoral degree. Sanskrit studies took root in America as well and a number of eminent scholars were associated with it – Lenman, Edgerton, Norman Brown, Whitney, Clarke and the two eminent contemporary scholars, D. D. Ingalls and George Cardona, whose works have, ironically, added respectability to Sanskrit Studies and promoted their acceptability in the Indian academy. This *sahastranama* is auspicious and should be enounced by all those who study or revere this tradition.[22]

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[21] From his Chicago Address, paragraph 1. This address was delivered on 11 September 1893 at the World Parliament of Religions.

[22] We obviously disagree with "anti-imperialists" and so-called "Orientalists."

As Shri Kamalakar Tiwari appropriately observes we owe a deep debt of gratitude to these European and British scholars – they renewed a whole tradition afresh by reconstituting the texts and gave them respectability by making them the object of serious study in the mainstream education of Europe. It is through the medium of Sanskrit scholars, Shri Tiwari writes, that: "We are getting to know our brightness/fairness. In this matter we shall ever remain grateful to the Western scholars who gave us the kind of sight (*drishti*) that makes it possible for us to see our own past" (11).

While William Jones did draw the attention of Europe to the Sanskrit language and its beauty through his translations of *Shakuntala* and *Manusmriti*, his scholarly efforts remained focused on post-Buddhist literature and Vedic literature remained a closed book. Colebrooke also did not realise the value of his work related to the *Rig Veda*. H. H. Wilson also remained mostly interested in later Sanskrit literature. At this point, Burnouf published a comparative grammar of Zend and Vedic Sanskrit and initiated an intellectual revolution in Europe for the next twenty-five years from 1826 to 1852.

VII

Burnouf's two disciples, Roth and Max Mueller, continued his work of foregrounding the intellectual strength of Vedic literature. Max Mueller's contribution in this recovery/renewal cycle is unequalled.

As Max Mueller declared, it was his "chief object … to try to remove [a most unhappy misconception] that [while Sanskrit texts may be pretty, quaint and curious] Sanskrit texts … either teach us nothing or teach what we do not care to know" (*India: What Can It Teach Us* 4). He therefore took it upon himself to defend the tradition and articulate it as an intellectual, and not as a fanciful tradition, and in the process, the reconstruction of texts became his major work. The tasks were inter-related – as by constructing an authentic edition of the *Rig Veda*, with Shayana's commentary, he both defended and articulated the Indian intellectual tradition.

However, it is important to note that in his seven lectures he explicitly devoted himself to the articulation and defence of the tradition.[23]

Max Mueller offers a reasoned defence, in sequence, against the charge that

(i) Sanskrit literature has no serious thought content (4);
(ii) Indians lacks truthfulness of character (33);
(iii) Sanskrit is a "dead" language (52);
(iv) Sanskrit literature is an artificial literature (54);
(v) Indians are impractical, therefore, failures in the material sense (61);
(vi) Vedic hymns are "irrational" outpourings (68);
(vii) Brahmins withheld knowledge from people (92);
(viii) The Vedas are purely fictitious (105) and primitive (31);
(ix) Vedic literature does not have the antiquity that is claimed for it (131);
(x) Modern India is in complete disjunction with its Vedic past (134);
(xi) Indian Vedic literature developed under the "foreign" influences of Babylonia, China, Persia, etc. (89)

[23] And this needs to be remembered by those who focus only on his "Christian" or "Imperialist" stance.

It is not necessary to go into the details of his arguments against these postulates; suffice it to say that he argues from facts and uses reason. As he says in the context of the oral tradition: "… we are not dealing with theories, but with facts, which anybody may verify" (131).

As for the articulation of the intellectual content of the tradition, we should note Max Mueller's exposition, the first of its kind, of the rationality, the substance and the purpose of the Vedas, Brahmanas, Aranyakas, Upanishads, Sutragranthas, Pratishakhyas and Vedanta. His exposition became the desiderata for subsequent research in Indian studies. In this expository discourse, Max Mueller defends Indian character and thought. He gives evidence of his profound insight into Indian life and thought and asserts that India has contributed in a major way to the "global," repository of knowledge and values. To give some examples:

(i) He claims that India has a place in "the history of the human mind" and his argument comes from the Sanskrit language. He cites the verb root √*as* as:

> … no language [he says,] could ever produce at once so empty, or, if you like so general a root as √*as*, to be … and this root √*as*, to breathe has to lose all signs of its original material character, before it could convey that purely abstract meaning of existence, without any qualification, which has rendered to the higher operations of thought the same service which the naught, likewise the invention of Indian genius, has to render in mathematics. Who will say how long the friction lasted which changed √*as*, to breathe, into √*as*, to be? (17)

(ii) After having talked of "the parallel columns of numerals, pronouns, and verbs in Sanskrit, Greek and Latin written on the blackboard, one felt in the presence of facts, before which no one has to bow," he underlines the consequence of this knowledge of affinity between India and Europe in these insightful terms:

> the concept of the European man has been changed and widely extended by our acquaintance with India, and we know now that we are something different from what we thought we were … many thousand years ago, we were something that had not developed into Englishman, or a Saxon, or a Greek, or a Hindu either … and this is not all … it [the attested Sanskrit literature] has imparted to the whole ancient history of man a reality which it never possessed before. (18-19)

(iii) Reacting to Mill's critique of the average Indian character, Max Mueller quotes Sleeman to make the observation that to know an Indian, he has to know him in the village community and then makes his own generalised point that "the political unit or the social cell in India has always been, and, in spite of repeated foreign conquests, is still the village community … we hear of the circles of 84 villages, the so called Chourasees …" (31).

(iv) Reacting again to Mill's charge, Max Mueller cites so many travellers and administrators to testify to the Hindus' reverence for truth and then cites etymological proof – "Their very word for truth is full of meaning. It is *sat* or *satya*, *sat* being the participle of the verb *as*, to be. Truth, therefore, was with them simply *that which is*" (41).

(v) He disputes the assertion that Sanskrit is a dead language and cites

several facts to show that though Sanskrit had ceased to exist "as a language spoken by the people at large … in the third century BC" yet such is the marvellous continuity between the past and the present in India that in spite of repeated social convulsions, religious reforms, and foreign invasions, Sanskrit may be said to be still the only language that is spoken over the whole extent of the vast country. He calls this the "third prejudice" and says that:

> even after a century of English rule and teaching … Sanskrit is more widely understood in India than Latin was in Europe at the time of Dante…. But even if Sanskrit were more of a dead language than it really is, all the living languages of India, both Aryan and Dravidian draw their very life and soul from Sanskrit [literature]. (51-53)

(vi) Talking of the range and the extent of Sanskrit *vanmaya*, he says that the examination of the manuscripts show that more than ten thousand "separate works" (texts in different domains of knowledge) are in existence. Saying that not all are of exemplary sophistication or excellence, he gives a parameter for judgement – judge an intellectual community by the best it has to offer:

> there runs through the whole history of India, its three or four thousand years, a high road … It may have been trodden by a few solitary wanderers … But to the historians of the human mind, those few solitary wanderers are after all the true representatives of India … Do not let us be deceived. The true history of the world must always be the history of the few; and just as we measure the Himalayas by the height of Mount Everest, we must take the true measure of India from the poets of the Vedas, the sages of the Upanishads, the founders of the Vedanta and Samkhya philosophies and the authors of the oldest law-books…. (54-55)

(vii) Contrasting the Indian meditative philosophy of life with the activism of the West, he pleads to see some value in reflection and then posits: "two hemispheres in human nature, both worth developing – the active, combative and political on the side, the passive meditative and the philosophical on the other…."

He later sets up an analogous opposition between "the northern Aryan and the southern Aryan" and asks why should we not be "satisfied with a little less of work, and a little less of pleasure, but a little more thought, and a little more of rest." And then in the spirit of the *Bhagavadgita*, he adds as a clincher: "For short as our life is, we are not mere Mayflies that are born in the morning to die at night." (61, 64)

(viii) Nilakantha Shastri says that while Mueller's theories of "Renaissance" in AD third century no longer find acceptance, the differences he noted between Vedic literature and later classical Sanskrit still hold good (73).

(ix) Mueller boldly rejects the theory that Brahmins "withheld their sacred literature from any but their own caste." Far from withholding it, they have been striving to make its study obligatory for the other castes. He also cites the reception his *Rig Veda* has received from the Brahmins (92).

(x) In the progressive structuring of the gods in the Vedas, he observes with great insight "the gradual advance from the material to the spiritual, from the sensuous to the super-

sensuous, from the human to the super-human and divine" (101).

(xi) Finally, his exposition of Vedic poetry, Vedic gods and domestic rituals enabled all subsequent research in these areas. Later scholars had only to pick up a sentence or a phrase from Max Mueller and elaborate upon it to shed light on the whole domain.[24] To see the strength of these first enunciations, one has only to cite Max Mueller's statement on the oral tradition of India (131-34), which is still informative in nature,[25] and his statement on Vedanta, a case of subtle interpretation (152-56). The following must be acknowledged as a rare right insight into this philosophical system, one worthy of our best seers:

> Much that was not dear, that had seemed for a time their very self, had to be surrendered before they could see the self of selves ... a subject independent of all personality ... then the highest knowledge began to dawn, the self within (*pratyagatman*) was drawn towards the Highest Self (*Paramatman*) ... the oneness of the subjective with the objective self was recognized as underlying all reality.... (155)

He adds that the leading tenets of the Vedanta are known to some extent in every village in India. And then he makes a remark that shows his great understanding of how the average Indian behaves (even today!): "In India ... notwithstanding the indifference to religious matters so often paraded before the world by the Indians themselves, religion and philosophy too, are great powers still" (154).

VIII

If we revert now to what we had said about the Vyasa-institution and its functions, it is clear that after the great disruption, a number of the Western scholars worked hard to re-constitute and re-establish and defend Indian thought. Of all these scholars, Max Mueller stands out for his life-long work.

Like a visionary, aware that all thought is human before it is Eastern or Western, he conceived, initiated and implemented, in large measure, an unrivalled, massive fifty-volume project of translations. Translation, as has been noted above, is a major instrument of dissemination and renewal of Indian texts. The act of translation is a very complex act – purpose, situations, format/nature and effect and function differ widely.[26]

First of all, inter-translatability is a philosophical problem as it involves "inter-cultural understanding, trans-cultural interpretation and trans-cultural evaluation" (Matilal 120). It also assumes a state of mind, a certain psychology of translation. There is in each act of translation, an attitude towards the source language and a certain assessment of the target language – it is a recognition of the intellectual strength of the source and of a vacuum or gap in the target language/culture. Translations from classical into modern languages may be done within the same culture and tradition or across cultures.

The first case is a real possibility. There are instances of some Buddhist texts having been retranslated into Sanskrit in modern times. These are

[24] Work in Vedic mythology by later scholars like Roman Jakobson may be cited as an example.

[25] He calls those who have memorised the texts, "living libraries" (132).

[26] For further details, see Kapil Kapoor, "Philosophy of Translation: Subordinating or Subordination."

cases of translations within the same overall intellectual tradition – a kind of special case of renewal, one of the three functional parameters of translations, diffusion and borrowing being the other two. Similarly, when a text is translated into a modern language in the same tradition, it is also to be considered as a case of renewal – the text becomes accessible once again in a widely spoken and used language. The text is recomposed in a way, and in the process it is reinterpreted and made intelligible to a much larger readership. It also becomes pertinent – once again it begins to function as an explanatory construct for contemporary realities. Translations of classical texts of literary theory, philosophy and grammar such as *Natyashastra*, *Mimamsasutra* and *Ashtadhyayi*, among others, into modern Indian languages are some recent examples of renewal.

When a text is translated into a modern language of another tradition/ culture, it is a case of diffusion. Diffusion as a horizontal concept is a special case of renewal – a text not only gets activated, it also spreads beyond its earlier boundaries. The most recent example is the translation of Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* into German, French and English in the nineteenth/twentieth centuries which made this proto-grammar available to a whole new world of European and Anglo-Saxon scholarship. In such inter-cultural transfers, the parameter of borrowing is also present. This is the most recent renewal of a text, which in the history of Indian thought has been renewed again and again through various processes of abridgement, recension, reordering and adaptation, besides translation.

But in recent times, the overwhelming trend has been of translations from European languages into modern Indian languages and these too chiefly from English. This is virtually a unidirectional flow – as the few translations of texts into English (or, other European languages) are meant not for the European audiences but for the Indian readers. Apart from the self-evident problems of translating between such distant languages, there is in this process an implicit but characteristic one-way intellectual relationship, in other words, a recipient-donor equation. In the last hundred years or so, the Indian languages have been placed in the role of a recipient, with European languages, particularly English, as the donor. As we said above, there is in this an implicit recognition of the source language as the intellectual reservoir, and of the relatively impoverished state of the target language. This could be just a state of mind nurtured by quite extraneous reasons in the translators who are, almost all of them, Indians. There are three pre-suppositions in this one-way traffic: that all the worthwhile things are being said by the speakers of other languages, that what is being said is worthwhile, and that we have nothing worthwhile to say in return. This state of mind is a part of the general attitude of uncritical subordination to Western ideas.

There is, on the other hand, another kind of translation activity – equally pervasive and for its intellectual merit and wide usefulness much more significant – that has a long history and has also been going on in a big way in recent times. We are talking of the translations of classical Sanskrit texts, technical as well as literary, into modern European languages mostly by European scholars and also by modern Indian

scholars. Sanskrit is the donor intellectual tradition in this transaction. Sanskrit has, in fact, always been a donor language for translations into Asian and European languages.

In the early centuries of the Christian era, Buddhist texts were translated into Chinese and later into Tibetan. Apart from this Northern connection, as attested by the Arab sources, there was considerable interaction between the Hindus and the pre-Islam Arabs on their west. Not much direct evidence remains but it is acknowledged that Hindu mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy travelled to the West in this phase. Even after the advent of Islam, on Alberuni's testimony, the relationship of give and take continued. From the eleventh century onwards, with the rise of modern Indian languages, Sanskrit (technical/cultural) texts began to be translated into those languages (Assamese, Marathi, Kannada, Telugu, etc.) as a method of preserving these texts through diffusion. At the same time, translations began to be made into Persian. Zain-ul-Abedin (1420-70), the enlightened ruler of Kashmir, established a translation bureau for bilateral renderings between Sanskrit and Persian. Dara Shikoh's Persian translations of the Upanishads and Mulla Ahmad's rendition of the *Mahabharata* are among the major islands in this stream. In the seventeenth-eighteenth century, the great Sikh Guru, Guru Gobind Singhji, set up a bureau and had a large number of Sanskrit texts translated into Punjabi.

In the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the encounter with the West resulted in a complex, bilateral, cultural-intellectual relationship. In the fields of science, engineering, and in the new disciplines such as politics and economics, English became the donor language for translations into Indian languages. In the fields of philosophy, religion, linguistics and literary theory, Sanskrit renewed its role as a donor language for translations into English and other European languages. In fact in the nineteenth century, Europe discovered India as much as India discovered Europe and the mutual influence was perhaps equal. By 1820, all the major universities of Europe had chairs in Sanskrit and Sanskrit studies had come to enjoy immense prestige. As the century progressed, Sanskrit studies increasingly shaped the European mind, and, as already noted, almost all the major European minds of the nineteenth century were either Sanskritists or, of their own admission, been deeply involved in Indian thought. In 1839-40, Otto Böhtlingk brought out an edition of Panini's *Ashtadhyayi* with German comments on rules and an index of technical terms with glosses. In 1841, N. L. Westergaard brought out an edition of the *Dhatupatha* (enumeration of Sanskrit verb roots) with Latin gloss and references. In 1858, Albrecht Weber published a German translation of the Vajasaneyi *Pratishakhya*. In 1862, W. D. Whitney brought out his English translation of the *Atharvaveda Pratishakhya*. In 1874, Lorenz Franz Kielhorn published a translation into English of Nagojibhatta's *Paribhashendushekhara*. This list of examples, restricted to grammatical texts, is illustrative of Europe's interest in Sanskrit technical literature. This engagement with Sanskrit literature continues. Europe was equally, if not more, interested in the philosophical literature in Sanskrit. It has been noted that as a result of these translations,

> ... Goethe and many other writers of the early 19th century read all they could of ancient Indian literature in translation.... From Goethe onwards most of the great German philosophers knew something of Indian philosophy. Schopenhauer, whose influence on literature and psychology has been so considerable, indeed openly admitted his debt, and his outlook was virtually that of Buddhism. The monism of Fichte and Hegel might never have taken the forms they did if it had not been for Anquetil-Duperron's translation of the Upanishads and the work of other pioneer Indologists. In the English speaking world the strongest Indian influence was felt in America, where Emerson, Thoreau and other New England writers avidly studied much Indian religious literature in translation, and exerted immense influence on their contemporaries and successors, notably Walt Whitman. Through Carlyle and others the German philosophers in their turn made their mark on England as did the Americans through many late 19th century writers.... (Basham 486-87)

Interaction with Sanskrit thought proved very fruitful intellectually for the Western tradition. Merely by translating an alien text into one's language one does not ensure the transfer of knowledge – knowledge assimilates knowledge. European scholars remained rooted firmly in their own intellectual tradition even while "translating" Indian thought – making possible a very constructive interaction, which produced, as we have already noted, a number of highly original thinkers. Besides, a whole new discipline developed – Historical and Comparative Linguistics – which extended the methods of philology to the classical languages other than Latin and Greek. And most importantly, these studies generated a new and very powerful conceptual system, Structuralism, which in itself and in its later avatars and alterities has continued to be the dominant intellectual construct of the twentieth century. Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of Structuralism, was a professor and a scholar of Sanskrit. His phonocentrism, his conception of language as speech, is an insight founded on the classical Indian theory of language. (The three Indian words for language, *vani*, *bhasha*, *vak*, mean respectively "speech," "sound," "statement.") Saussure was a scholar of Sanskrit grammar and at the time of his death was working on the symmetries in the *Rig Veda*.

This was an exemplary interaction between two intellectual traditions, the kind of interaction that the Indian scholars failed to achieve in modern times because having abandoned their own intellectual tradition they did not have the requisite frame of knowledge to receive knowledge. Thus the enterprise of translation from the European into Indian languages has not proved fruitful at all because it was not conceived carefully as a part of any larger intellectual goal. It amounts to a willing acceptance of the recipient's role. The effect of these translations has been to increasingly marginalise the native traditions of thought. This trend has been countered only by the translations from Sanskrit into the modern languages, particularly European. The European translations foregrounded these texts and the prestige and importance that their ideas acquired in the West gained them the esteem of the Indian academia as well, thus putting them on the agenda of Indian scholarship once again. It is in the middle of the nineteenth century that in Europe the first translations of Indian texts began to be made. At the same

time in India, major Sanskrit texts began to be translated into English. The motivation, no doubt, was a little different from that of the European work – the Indian translations were a part of a larger process of resistance to the alien domination, an expression of identity, a reassertion of the native self.[27]

Max Mueller's project of translating the *Sacred Books of the East* has to be assessed in this perspective. This was the first planned programme for translating a series of texts of thought from six major cultures (Judaism was left out). In the Programme of Translation and in the Preface to the Series, the learned Professor dwells on the difficulties and problems in such a programme of translations and on his well-considered philosophy of translation:

> We must not expect, [he says,] that a translation of the sacred books of the ancients can ever be more than an approximation of our language to theirs, of our thought to theirs. The translator, however, if he has once gained the conviction that it is impossible to translate old thought into modern speech, without doing some violence either to the one or to the other, will hardly hesitate in his choice ... He will prefer to do some violence to language.... (xxxvii)
>
> I have thought it best therefore to keep as close as possible to the Sanskrit original and where I could not find an adequate term in English, I have often retained the Sanskrit word.... (xxxii)

He was negotiating a very difficult terrain in overcoming both prejudice and opposition to the whole project of introducing Eastern thought to the West with the firm conviction that,

> Here is ... in every one of the sacred books, something that could make man ... shrink from evil and incline to good, something to sustain him in the short journey through life, with its bright moments of happiness, and its long hours of terrible distress. (xxxviii)

Of the forty-nine volumes, after excluding the Index volume, thirty-two are Vedic, Buddhist and Jain texts. Of these, Max Mueller personally translated the *Rig Veda* and the Upanishads and was one of the three translators of the Buddhist Mahayana texts.

But his outstanding contribution was his reconstitution and translation of the *Rig Veda* text with Shayana's commentary. This was the work of his mature years which followed his first translation of the selected hymns of the *Rig Veda* (*Rig-veda-sanhita*) for Sanskrit scholars only "explaining every word and sentence that seems to require elucidation, and carefully examining the opinions of early commentators, both native and European"(xliv). I had taken the liberty to suggest, to much opposition and some applause, in a seminar at Calcutta that as reconstituting the *Rig Veda* seems to be the prime determinant of the Vyasa status, we may recognise Max Mueller's place in the intellectual traditions as the thirty-third Vyasa. We have recognised Yaska of the ninth century BC, as the thirty-first Vyasa and Adi Shankara of AD seventh century as the thirty-second Vyasa. True, there was a palpable contradiction in his own attitude to Eastern knowledge and texts, and he swung between adulation and disgust. But to assess his contribution, we should apply to his work the same parameter of the "Himalayas" that he had applied to the Indian texts.

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[27] But, and this is important, this effort was supported by the British whose eclecticism and real love for scholarship must be recognised as not all the translations they commissioned or supported were a part of their administrative requirement

Thus around Max Mueller, and inspired by him, the central texts of Indian culture were once again renewed and re-established in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries after a period of textual dispersal and neglect spread over eight centuries. In fact it was through translations that these texts gained a large new readership. His *Sacred Books* inspired The Harvard Oriental Series. Of the first forty-seven texts that have been textually edited, translated and published in the Series, with Charles Rockwell as the General Editor to begin with, twenty-seven are Indian texts.[28] These two series renewed a large number of texts of Indian (Brahmin, Buddhist, Jain) thought and literature and enabled and strengthened Indian studies. They also motivated and inspired Indian scholars to undertake the study of their own tradition with Western methods.

IX

This diffusion and dissemination across cultures has also created a new challenge for Indian scholars – the need to defend the texts and the tradition in the face of attacks from the materialists, the proponents of the "modernist" reading and the Hebraic anti-polytheists.

Some Western scholars and their Indian followers do what one may call meta-reading; they talk about the text and ask "why" before they ascertain "what." Their purpose is to undermine the traditional reverence for the texts. They do this by selecting parts and portions of texts and making original claims by applying questionable methods of interpretation to those bits and pieces. There is also the attitudinal difference in these modes of scholarship. Subversion of beliefs and values is acclaimed as originality and takes precedence over a total, unbiased interpretation of the text. Debunking is very dear and meaning becomes the instrument for some given social/political purpose.

Now that such readings of Indian texts are setting the goals and modes of reading in the mainstream institutions of learning in India, it is imperative that Indian scholars should revert to, and cultivate, the traditional *shastra paddhati*, the method of interpreting the texts. The methods of traditional scholarship should be replicated and the traditional institutions and scholars must be given total state support in a way that does not subject them to the methods and limitations of the mainstream Macaulayan system. Only that will maintain, renew and keep relevant India's intellectual traditions and texts. Right now the pressures of "modernity" are proving too much and the Pundits are busy storing in the computer what they used to store in their minds. The whole philosophy of knowledge is thus shifting. From an interiorised, subject-centred knowledge formation and storage of Indian theory, we are fast moving towards an exteriorised, object-centred system.

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[28] *Jatakamala*; *Vijnanabhikshu*; *Buddhism in Translation: Passages Selected From the Buddhist Sacred Books*; *Karpuramanjar*; *Brihaddevata*; *Atharvaveda Samhita* (2 vols.); *Vedic Concordance*; *Panchatantra*; *Yoga System* (of Patanjali); *Veda of the Black Yajurveda School Entitled Taittiriya Samhita* (2 vols.); *Rig Veda Brahmanas: The Aitareya and Kaushitaki Brahmanas of the Rigveda*; *Buddhist legends: Dhammapada Commentary* (2 vols.); *The Religion and Philosophy of the Veda and Upanishads* (2 vols); *Rig Veda* (4 vols.); *Materials for the Study of Navya-Nyaya Logic*; *Vishuddhimagga* (of Buddhaghosha); *Shubhashitartnakosha* (of Vidyakara); *Saundaryalahiri*; *Anthology of Sanskrit Court Poetry*; *Navya-Nyaya Doctrine of Negation: The Semantics and Ontology of Negative Statements in Navya Nyaya Philosophy*; *Dignaga on Perception*.

Smriti (memory) has been accepted as the crucial first part of intellection apart from *vimarsha* (reflection/ permutation) and *prayoga* (application) – unless we have something in our mind, what will we reflect on! The exteriorised, necessarily sequential, sensory mode of knowledge formation closes all possibilities of those kinds of knowledge that are born of deep inward reflection and a certain *ekagrata* (one-pointedness, concentration). This can only inevitably have deleterious consequences for knowledge-creation. In such a scenario – of competition from the all-powerful Western model – the question that is of utmost importance now is: how do we maintain and sustain the Indian knowledge-tradition.

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essay

Countering World-Negation: The World Affirming and Integrative Dimension of Classical Yoga

Ian Whicher

Introduction

THIS PAPER CENTRES ON the thought of Patanjali (second-third century CE), the great exponent of the authoritative classical Yoga darshana (school) of Hinduism and the reputed author of the *Yogasutras*.[1] I will argue that Patanjali's philosophical perspective has, far too often, been looked upon as excessively "spiritual" or isolationistic to the point of being a world-denying philosophy, indifferent to moral endeavour, neglecting the world of nature and culture, and overlooking the highest potentials for human reality, vitality and creativity. Contrary to the arguments presented by many scholars, which associate Patanjali's Yoga exclusively with extreme asceticism, mortification, denial, and the renunciation and abandonment of *prakriti* (material existence) in favour of an elevated and isolated *purusha* (spiritual state) or disembodied state of spiritual liberation, I suggest that Patanjali's Yoga can be seen as a responsible engagement, in various ways, of "spirit" (*purusha* = intrinsic identity as Self, pure consciousness) and "matter" (*prakriti* = the source of psychophysical being, which includes mind, body, nature) resulting in a highly developed, transformed, and participatory human nature and identity, an integrated and embodied state of *jivanmukti* (liberated selfhood).

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The interpretation of Patanjali's Yoga darshana presented in this paper – which treads the line between

[1] This and other Sanskrit texts will be cited using abbreviations for purposes of conveniences throughout this paper. They are as follows:

BG *Bhagavadgita*

RM *Raja-Martana* of Bhoja Raja (c. eleventh century CE)

SK *Samkhya Karika* of Ishvara Krishna (c. fourth-fifth century CE)

TV *Tattva-Vaisharadi* of Vachaspati Mishra (c. ninth century CE)

YB *Yogabhashya* of Vyasa (c. fifth-sixth century CE)

YS *Yogasutras* of Patanjali (c. second-third century CE)

YSS *Yogasarasamgraha* of Vijnana Bhikshu (c. sixteenth century CE)

YV *Yogavartika* of Vijnana Bhikshu

an historical and hermeneutic-praxis (some might say theological or "systematic") orientation – counters the radically dualistic, isolationistic and ontologically oriented interpretations of Yoga[2] presented by many scholars. It suggests, instead, an open-ended, epistemologically oriented hermeneutic which, I maintain, is more appropriate for arriving at a genuine assessment of Patanjali's system.

It is often said that, like classical Samkhya, Patanjali's Yoga is a dualistic system, understood in terms of *purusha* and *prakriti*. Yet, I submit that Yoga scholarship has not clarified what "dualistic" means or why Yoga had to be "dualistic." Even in avowedly non-dualistic systems of thought such as Advaita Vedanta we can find numerous examples of basically dualistic modes of description and explanation (for example, note Shankara's [c. eighth-ninth century CE] use of *vyavaharika* or the conventional empirical perspective in contrast to *paramarthika* or the ultimate or absolute standpoint).

Elsewhere I have suggested the possibility of Patanjali having asserted a provisional, descriptive, and "practical" metaphysics, i.e., in the *Yogasutras* the metaphysical schematic is abstracted from yogic experience, whereas in classical Samkhya, as set out in Ishvara Krishna's *Samkhya Karika*, "experiences" are fitted into a metaphysical structure (Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*). This approach would allow the *Yogasutras* to be interpreted along more open-ended, epistemologically oriented lines without being held captive by the radical, dualistic metaphysics of Samkhya. Despite intentions to render the experiential dimension of Yoga purged as far as possible from abstract metaphysical knowledge, many scholars have fallen prey to reading the *Yogasutras* from the most abstract level of the dualism of *purusha* and *prakriti* down to an understanding of the practices advocated. Then they proceed to impute an experiential foundation to the whole scheme informed not from mystical insight or yogic experience, but from the effort to form a consistent (dualistic) worldview, a view that culminates in a radical dualistic finality or closure.[3]

Patanjali's philosophy is not based upon mere theoretical or speculative knowledge. It elicits a practical, pragmatic, experiential/perceptual (not merely inferential/theoretical) approach that he deems essential in order to deal effectively with our total human

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[2] The system of classical Yoga is often reduced to or fitted into a classical Samkhya scheme – the interpretations of which generally follow along radically dualistic lines. In their metaphysical ideas classical Samkhya and Yoga are closely akin. However, both systems hold divergent views on important areas of doctrinal structure such as epistemology, ontology, ethics, and psychology, as well as differences pertaining to terminology. These differences derive in part from the different methodologies adopted by the two schools: Samkhya, it has been argued, emphasises a theoretical or intellectual analysis through inference and reasoning in order to bring out the nature of final emancipation, while Yoga stresses yogic perception and multiple forms of practice that culminate in samadhi. Moreover, there is clear evidence throughout all four *padas* of the *Yogasutras* of an extensive network of terminology that parallels Buddhist teachings. This is absent in the classical Samkhya literature. Patanjali includes several *sutras* on the "restraints" or *yamas* (namely, ahimsa [non-violence], *satya* [truthfulness], *asteya* [non-stealing], *brahmacharya* [chastity], and *aparigraha* [non-possession]) of the "eight-limbed" path of Yoga that are listed in the *Acharanga Sutra* of Jainism (the earliest sections of which may date from the third or fourth century BCE). This also suggests possible Jaina influences on the Yoga tradition. The topic of Buddhist or Jaina influence on Yoga doctrine (or vice versa) is, however, not the focus of this paper.

[3] See, in particular, Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga* 14, 56, 108; Eliade, *Yoga* 94-95, 99-100; Koelman, *Patanjala Yoga* 224, 251; and G. Larson, who classifies Patanjali's Yoga as a form of Samkhya (Larson and Bhattacharya, *Samkhya* 13).

situation and provide real freedom, and not just a theory of liberation or a metaphysical explanation of life. Yoga is not content with *jnana* (knowledge) perceived as a state that abstracts away from the world, removing us from our human embodiment and activity in the world. Rather, Yoga emphasises knowledge in the integrity of being and action and as serving the integration of the "person" as a "whole." Edgerton concluded in a study dedicated to the meaning of Yoga that: "… Yoga is not a 'system' of belief or of metaphysics. It is always a way, a method of getting something, usually salvation …" (1-46). But this does not say enough, does not fully take into account what might be called the integrity of Patanjali's Yoga. Yoga derives its real strength and value through an integration of theory and practice (Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*).

Nirodha (Cessation) and the *Pratiprasava* (Return to the Source): Transformation or Elimination/Negation of the Mind

In Patanjali's central definition of Yoga, it is defined as *yoga chittavrittinirodha* or "the cessation (*nirodha*) of [the misidentification with] the modifications (*vritti*) of the mind (*citta*)" (Agashe 4; YS I.2).[4] What kind of "cessation" we must ask is Patanjali actually referring to in his classical definition of Yoga? What does the process of cessation actually entail for the yogin ethically, epistemologically, ontologically, psychologically, and so on? I have elsewhere suggested that *nirodha* denotes an epistemological emphasis and refers to the transformation of self-understanding brought about through the purification and illumination of consciousness; *nirodha* is not (for the yogin) the ontological cessation of *prakriti*, i.e., the mind and *vrittis* (Whicher, "Nirodha, Yoga Praxis and the Transformation of the Mind" 1-67; *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*). Seen here, *nirodha* thus is not, as is often explained, an inward movement that annihilates or suppresses *vrittis*, thoughts, intentions, or *pratyaya* (ideas), nor is it the non-existence or absence of *vritti*; rather, *nirodha* involves a progressive unfolding of perception or *yogi-pratyaksha*) that eventually reveals our true identity as *purusha*. It is the state of *klesha* (affliction) evidenced in the mind and not the mind itself that is at issue.

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[4] For all purposes of reference in this paper, the Sanskrit text of the *Yogasutras* of Patanjali and the YB of Vyasa is from Agashe's *The Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali*. The *vritti* (modifications or functions) of the *chitta* (mind) are said to be five-fold (YS I.6), namely, "valid cognition" (*pramana*, which includes *pratyaksha* [perception], *anumana* [inference] and *agama* [valid testimony]), *viparyaya* (error/misconception), *vikalpa* (conceptualisation), *nidra* (sleep) and *smriti* (memory), and are described as being *klishta* (afflicted) or *aklishta* (non-afflicted) (YS I.5). *Chitta* is an umbrella term that incorporates *buddhi* (intellect), *ahamkara* (sense of self) and *manas* (mind-organ), and can be viewed as the aggregate of the cognitive, conative and affective processes and functions of phenomenal consciousness, i.e., it consists of a grasping, intentional and volitional consciousness. For an in-depth look at the meaning of the terms *chitta* and *vritti*, see Whicher, "Nirodha, Yoga Praxis and the Transformation of the Mind," and *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*. In the first four *sutras* of the first chapter ("Samadhi-Pada") the subject matter of the *Yogasutras* is mentioned, defined and characterised. The *sutras* run as follows: "Now [begins] the discipline of Yoga" (YS I.1); "Yoga is the cessation of [the misidentification with] the modifications of the mind" (YS I.2); "Then [when that cessation has taken place] there is abiding in the seer's own form (i.e., *purusha* or intrinsic identity)" (YS I.3); "Otherwise [there is] conformity to (i.e., misidentification with) the modifications [of the mind]" (YS I.4); and *atha yogānuśāsanam; yogaś cittavṛ ttinirodhaḥ; tadā draṣñuḥ svarūpe'vasthā nam; vṛttisārūpyam itaratra* (YS I.1-4 in Agashe 1, 4, 7, and 7 respectively). For a more comprehensive study of classical Yoga, including issues dealt with in this paper, see Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*.

Chittavritti does not stand for all modifications or mental processes (cognitive, affective, emotive), but is the very *bija* (seed) mechanism of the misidentification with *prakriti* from which all other *vrittis* and thoughts arise and are (mis)appropriated or self-referenced in the state of *avidya* (ignorance), that is, the unenlightened state of mind. Spiritual ignorance gives rise to a malfunctioning or misalignment of *vritti* within consciousness that in Yoga can be corrected, thereby allowing for a proper alignment or "right" functioning of *vritti* (Whicher, "Nirodha, Yoga Praxis and the Transformation of the Mind" 1-67; *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*). It is the *chittavritti* as our confused and mistaken identity, not our *vrittis*, thoughts, and experiences in total that must be brought to a state of definitive cessation. To be sure, there is a temporary suspension of all the mental processes as well as any identification with an object (i.e., in *asamprajnata-samadhi*, this being for the final purification of the mind [Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*, ch. 6]), but it would be misleading to conclude that higher samadhi results in a permanent or definitive cessation of the *vrittis* in total, thereby predisposing the yogin who has attained purity of mind to exist in an incapacitated, isolated, or mindless state and therefore of being incapable of living a balanced, useful, and productive life in various ways.

From the perspective of the discerning *vivekin* (yogin) human identity contained within the domain of the three *gunas* of *prakriti* (i.e., *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*) amounts to nothing more than *dukkha* (sorrow and dissatisfaction):

> *pariṇāmatāpasaṃskāraduḥkhair*
> *guṇavṛttivirodhā c ca*
> *duḥkham eva sarvaṃ vivekinaḥ*
>
> Because of the dissatisfaction and sufferings due to change and anxieties and the latent impressions, and from the conflict of the modifications of the *gunas*, for the discerning one, all is sorrow alone. (Agashe 74; YS II.15)

The declared goal of classical Yoga, as with Samkhya and Buddhism, is to overcome all dissatisfaction or *dukkha* (YS II.16), by bringing about an inverse movement or *pratiprasava* (counter-flow)[5] understood as a "return to the origin" (Chapple and Kelly 60) or "process-of-involution" (Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation* 65) of the *gunas*, a kind of re-absorption into the transcendent purity of being itself. What does this "process-of-involution" – variously referred to as "return to the origin," "dissolution into the source" or "withdrawal from manifestation" – actually mean (cf. Leggett, *The Complete Commentary by Shankara on the Yoga Sutras* 195; and Arya, *Yoga-Sutras of Patanjali with the Exposition of Vyasa* 146, 471)? Is it a definitive ending to the perceived world of the yogin comprising change and transformation, forms and phenomena? Ontologically conceived, *prasava* signifies the "flowing forth" of the primary constituents or qualities of *prakriti* into the multiple forms of the universe in all its dimensions, i.e., all the processes of *sarga*, *prasarga* (manifestation and actualisation or "creation"). *Pratiprasava* on the other hand denotes the process of "dissolution into the source" or "withdrawal from manifestation" of those forms relative to the personal, microcosmic level of the

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[5] Patanjali uses the term *pratiprasava* twice (YS II.10, IV.34).

yogin who is about to attain *apavarga* (freedom).

Does a "return to the origin" culminate in a state of freedom in which one is stripped of all human identity and void of any association with the world including one's practical livelihood? The ontological emphasis usually given to the meaning of *pratiprasava* – implying for the yogin a literal dissolution of *prakriti's* manifestation – would seem to support a view, which is prominent in Yoga scholarship, of spiritual liberation denoting an existence wholly transcendent (and therefore stripped or deprived) of all manifestation including the human relational sphere. Is this the kind of spiritually emancipated state that Patanjali had in mind (pun included)? In YS II.3-17 (which set the stage for the remainder of the chapter on yogic means or *sadhana*), Patanjali describes *prakriti*, the "seeable" (including our personhood), in the context of the various *kleshas* (afflictions) that give rise to an afflicted and mistaken identity of self. Afflicted identity is constructed out of and held captive by the root affliction of *avidya* (ignorance) and its various forms of karmic bondage. Yet, despite the clear association of *prakriti* with the bondage of *avidya* (ignorance), there are no real grounds for purporting that *prakriti* herself is to be equated with, or subsumed under, the afflictions. To equate *prakriti* with affliction itself implies that as a product of spiritual ignorance, *prakriti*, along with the afflictions, is conceived as a reality that the yogin should ultimately abandon, condemn, avoid or discard completely. Patanjali leaves much room for understanding "dissolution" or "return to the source" with an epistemological emphasis, thereby allowing the whole system of the Yoga darshana to be interpreted along more open-ended lines. In other words, what actually "dissolves" or is ended in Yoga is the yogin's misidentification with *prakriti*, a mistaken identity of self that – contrary to authentic identity, namely *purusha* – can be nothing more than a product of the three *gunas* under the influence of spiritual ignorance. Understood as such, *pratiprasava* need not denote the definitive ontological dissolution of manifest *prakriti* for the yogin, but rather refers to the process of "subtilisation" or *sattvification* of consciousness, so necessary for the uprooting of misidentification – the incorrect worldview born of *avidya* – or incapacity of the yogin to "see" from the yogic perspective of the *drashtri* (seer), our authentic identity as *purusha*.

The discerning yogin sees (YS II.15) that this *gunic* world or cycle of *samsaric* identity is in itself *dukkha* (dissatisfaction). But we must ask, what exactly is the problem being addressed in Yoga? What is at issue in Yoga philosophy? Is our ontological status as a human being involved in day-to-day existence forever in doubt, in fact, in need of being negated, dissolved in order for authentic identity or *purusha*, immortal consciousness, finally to dawn? Having overcome all ignorance, is it then possible for a human being to live in the world and no longer be in conflict with oneself and the world? Can the *gunas* cease to function in a state of ignorance and conflict in the mind? Must the *gunic* constitution of the human mind and the whole of *prakritic* existence disappear, dissolve for the yogin? Can the ways of spiritual ignorance be replaced by an aware, conscious, non-afflicted identity and activity that transcend the conflict and confusion of ordinary, *samsaric* life? Can we live, according to Patanjali's Yoga, an embodied state of freedom?

Kaivalya (Aloneness): Implications for an Embodied Freedom

In the classical traditions of Samkhya and Yoga, *kaivalya*, meaning "aloneness,"[6] is generally understood to be the state of the unconditional existence of *purusha*. In the *Yogasutras*, *kaivalya* can refer more precisely to the *drishen kaivalyam* (aloneness of seeing). *tadabhāvāt saṃyogābhāvo hānaṃ taddṛśeḥ kaivalyam* (Agashe 96; YS II.25): as Patanjali states, it follows from the disappearance of *avidya* (ignorance) and its creation of *samyoga* – the conjunction of the *purusha* (seer) and the *chitta* and the *gunas* (i.e., the seeable) – explained by Vyasa as *adhyaropa* or a mental superimposition (YB II.18). "Aloneness" thus can be construed as *purusha's* innate capacity for pure, unbroken, non-attached seeing/perceiving, observing or "knowing" of the content of the *chitta* or mind (YS II.20, IV.18). In an alternative definition, Patanjali explains *kaivalya* as the *pratiprasava* (return to the origin) of the *gunas*, which have lost all soteriological purpose for the *purusha* that has, as it were, recovered its transcendent autonomy:

> *puruṣārthaśūyānāṃ guṇānāṃ*
> *pratiprasavaḥ kaivalyaṃ*
> *svarūpapratiṣñhā vā citiśaktir iti*
> (Agashe 207; YS IV.34).

This *sutra* also classifies *kaivalya* as the establishment in *svarupa* (own form/nature), and the power of *chittashakti* (higher awareness). Although the *drashtri/purusha's* (seer's) capacity for "seeing" is an unchanging yet dynamic power of consciousness that should not be truncated in any way, nevertheless our karmically distorted or skewed perceptions vitiate against the natural fullness of "seeing." Patanjali defines spiritual *avidya* (ignorance), the root affliction, as "seeing the non-eternal as eternal, the impure as pure, dissatisfaction as happiness, and the non-self as self" (YS II.5). Having removed *adarshana* (the failure-to-see), the soteriological purpose of the *gunas* in the *samsaric* condition of the mind is fulfilled; the mind is relieved of its former role of being a vehicle for *avidya,* the locus of egoity and misidentification, and the realisation of pure seeing – the nature of the seer alone – takes place.

According to yet another *sutra*, we are told that *kaivalya* is established when the *sattva* of consciousness has reached a state of purity analogous to that of the *purusha*: *sattvapuruṣayoḥ śuddhisāmye kaivalyam iti* (Agashe 174; YS III.55).[7] Through the process of subtilisation or *pratiprasava* (return to the origin) in the *sattva*, the *parinama* (transformation) of the *chitta* (mind) takes place at the deepest level

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[6] The term *kaivalya* comes from *kevala*, meaning alone. Feuerstein also translates *kaivalya* as "aloneness" but with a metaphysical or ontological emphasis that implies the absolute separation of *purusha* and *prakriti* (*Feuerstein, The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation* 75).

[7] One must be careful not to characterise the state of *sattva* itself as liberation or *kaivalya*, for without the presence of *purusha*, the mind (as reflected consciousness) could not function in its most transparent aspect as *sattva*. It is not accurate, according to Yoga philosophy, to say that the *sattva* is equivalent to liberation itself. The question of the nature of the *gunas* from the enlightened perspective is an interesting one. In the *Bhagavadgita* (II.45), Krishna advises Arjuna to become free from the three *gunas* and then gives further instructions to be established in eternal *sattva* (beingness, light, goodness, clarity, knowledge), free of dualities, free of acquisition-and-possession, self-possessed: *nirdvandvo nityasattvastho niryogakṣema ātmavān*. It would appear from the above instructions that the nature of the *sattva* being referred to here transcends the limitations of the nature of *sattva-guna* which can still have a binding effect in the form of attachment to joy and knowledge. It is, however, only by first overcoming *rajas* and *tamas* that liberation is possible.

bringing about a radical change in perspective: the former impure, fabricated states constituting a fractured identity of self are dissolved resulting in the complete purification of the mind. Through knowledge (in *samprajnata-samadhi*) and its transcendence (in *asamprajnata-samadhi*) self-identity overcomes its lack of intrinsic grounding, a lack sustained and exacerbated by the web of afflictions in the form of attachment, aversion, and the compulsive clinging to life based on the fear of extinction. The yogin is no longer dependent on liberating knowledge or *mind-sattva*:

> *nahi dagdhakleśabījasya jñāne punar apekṣā kācid asti*
>
> When the seeds of afflictions have been scorched there is no longer any dependence at all on further knowledge. (Agashe 175; YB III.55)

The yogin is no longer attached to *vritti* as a basis for self-identity. Cessation, it must be emphasised, does not mark a definitive disappearance of the *gunas* from *purusha's* view. As Aranya writes, in the state of *nirodha* the *gunas* "do not die out but their unbalanced activity due to non-equilibrium that was taking place … only ceases on account of the cessation of the cause (*avidya* or nescience) which brought about their contact" (123). For the liberated yogin, therefore, the *gunas* cease to exist in the form of *avidya* and its *samskaras*, *vrittis*, and false or fixed *pratyaya* (ideas) of selfhood that formerly veiled true identity. The changing *gunic* modes cannot alter the yogin's now purified and firmly established consciousness. The mind has been liberated from the egocentric world of attachment to things *prakritic*. Now the yogin's identity (as *purusha*), disassociated from ignorance, is untouched, unaffected by qualities of mind,

> *puruṣas tv asatyām avidyāyāṃ śuddhaś cittadharmair aparāmṛṣña*
> (Agashe 201; YB IV.25)

It is uninfluenced by the *vrittis* constituted of the three *gunas*. The mind and *purusha* attain to a sameness of purity (YS III.55), of harmony, balance, evenness, and a workability together: the mind appearing in the nature of *purusha* (YB I.41).

Kaivalya, I suggest, in no way destroys or negates the personality of the yogin, but is an unconditional state in which all the obstacles or distractions preventing an immanent and purified relationship or engagement of the person with nature and *purusha* (spirit) have been removed. The mind, which previously functioned under the sway of ignorance, colouring and blocking our perception of authentic identity, has now become purified and no longer operates as a locus of misidentification, confusion, and *dukkha* (dissatisfaction). *Sattva*, the finest *guna* (quality) of the mind, has the capacity to be perfectly lucid/transparent, like a dust-free mirror in which the light of *purusha* is clearly reflected and *vivekakhyati* (YS II.26) or the discriminative discernment (between *purusha* and the *sattva*) of the mind (as the finest nature of the seeable) can take place (YS III.49).

The crucial (ontological) point to be made here is that in the "aloneness" of *Kaivalya*, *prakriti* ceases to perform an obstructing role. In effect, *prakriti* herself has become purified, illuminated, and liberated[8] from

[8] Vijnana Bhikshu insists that *kaivalya* is a state of liberation for both *purusha* and *prakriti*, each reaching its respective natural or intrinsic state (Rukmani IV.141; YV IV.34). He then cites the *Samkhya Karika* (62) where it is stated that no *purusha* is bound, liberated or transmigrates. It is only *prakriti* abiding in her various forms that transmigrates, is bound and becomes liberated. For references to Vijnana Bhikshu's YV, I have consulted the four volumes by T. S. Rukmani.

avidya's grip including the misconceptions, misappropriations, and misguided relations implicit within a world of afflicted identity. The mind has been transformed, liberated from the egocentric world of attachment, its former afflicted nature abolished; and self-identity left alone in its "own form" or true nature as *purusha* is never again confused with all the relational acts, intentions, and volitions of empirical existence. There being no power of misidentification remaining in *nirbija-samadhi* (YS I.51; III.8),[9] the mind ceases to operate within the context of the afflictions, karmic accumulations, and consequent cycles of *samsara* implying a mistaken identity of selfhood subject to birth and death.

The *Yogasutras* have often been regarded as calling for the severance of *purusha* from *prakriti*; concepts such as liberation, cessation, detachment/dispassion, and so forth have been interpreted in an explicitly negative light. Max Mueller, citing Bhoja Raja's commentary (RM I.1), refers to Yoga as "separation" or *viyoga* (309). More recently, numerous other scholars have endorsed this interpretation, that is, the absolute separateness of *purusha* and *prakriti* (Eliade, *Yoga*; Koelman, *Patanjala Yoga*; Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation*; and Larson and Bhattacharya, *Samkhya*). In asserting the absolute separation of *purusha* and *prakriti*, scholars and non-scholars alike have tended to disregard the possibility for other (fresh) hermeneutical options, and this radical, dualistic metaphysical closure of sorts surrounding the nature and meaning of Patanjali's Yoga has proved detrimental to a fuller understanding of the Yoga darshana by continuing a tradition based on an isolationistic, one-sided reading (or perhaps misreading) of the *Yogasutras* and Vyasa's commentary. Accordingly, the absolute separation of *purusha* and *prakriti* can only be interpreted as a disembodied state implying death to the physical body. To dislodge the sage from bodily existence is to undermine the integrity of the pedagogical context that lends so much credibility or "weight" to the Yoga system. I am not here implying a simple idealisation of Yoga pedagogy thereby overlooking the need to incorporate a healthy critical approach to the *guru-shishya* dynamic. Rather, I am suggesting that it need not be assumed that, in Yoga, liberation coincides with physical death.[10] This would only allow for a soteriological end state of *videhamukti* (disembodied liberation). What is involved in Yoga is

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[9] The state of *nirbija* or "seedless" *samadhi* can be understood as the liberated state where no "seed" of ignorance remains, any further potential for affliction (i.e., as mental impressions or *samskaras*) having been purified from the mind.

[10] I am here echoing some of the points made by Chapple in his paper entitled, "*Chitta-vritti* and Reality in the *Yoga Sutra*" 103-19. See also Chapple and Viraj, *The Yoga Sutras of Patanjali*, where the authors state: " … *kaivalyam* … is not a catatonic state nor does it require death" (5). SK (67) acknowledges that even the "potter's wheel" continues to turn because of the force of *samskaras* (past impressions); but in Yoga, higher dispassion and *asamprajnata* eventually exhaust all the impressions or karmic residue. Through a continued programme of ongoing purification Yoga allows for the possibility of an embodied state of freedom utterly unburdened by the effects of past actions. As such Yoga constitutes an advance over the fatalistic perspective in Samkhya where the "wheel of samsara" continues (after the initial experience of liberating knowledge) until, in the event of separation from the body, *prakriti* ceases and *kaivalya* or unending isolation) is attained (SK 68). In any case, the yogic state of supracognitive samadhi or enstasy goes beyond the liberating knowledge of *viveka* in the Samkhya system in that the yogin must develop dispassion even toward discriminative discernment itself. For more on an analysis of the notion of liberation in Samkhya and Yoga, see Chapple's chapter on "Living Liberation in Samkhya and Yoga."

the death of the atomistic, egoic identity, the dissolution of the karmic web of *samsara* that generates notions of one being a subject trapped in the *prakritic* constitution of a particular body-mind.

Not being content with mere theoretical knowledge, Yoga is committed to a practical way of life. To this end, Patanjali included in his presentation of Yoga an outline of *ashtanga-yoga* or the "eight-limbed" path (YS II.29)[11] dealing with the physical, moral, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of the yogin, an integral path that emphasises organic continuity, balance, and integration in contrast to the discontinuity, imbalance, and disintegration inherent in *samyoga*. The idea of cosmic balance and of the mutual support and upholding of the various parts of nature and society is not foreign to Yoga thought. Vyasa deals with the theory of *nava karanani* (nine causes) or types of causation according to tradition (Agashe 99-101; YB II.28). The ninth type of cause is termed *dhriti* – meaning "support" or "sustenance." Based on Vyasa's explanation of *dhriti* we can see how mutuality and sustenance are understood as essential conditions for the maintenance of the natural and social world. There is an organic interdependence of all living entities wherein all (i.e., the elements, animals, humans, and divine bodies) work together for the "good" of the whole and for each other.

Far from being exclusively a subjectively oriented and introverted path of withdrawal from life, classical Yoga acknowledges the intrinsic value of "support" and "sustenance" and the interdependence of all living (embodied) entities, thus upholding organic continuity, balance, and integration within the natural and social world. Having achieved that level of *prajna* (insight), that is *rtambhara* or "truth-bearing" (YS I.48), the yogin perceives the *rta* (natural order) of cosmic existence, "unites" with, and embodies that order. To fail to see clearly or *adarshana* is to fall into disorder, disharmony, and conflict with oneself and the world. In effect, to be ensconced in ignorance implies a disunion with the natural order of life and inextricably results in a failure to embody that order. Through Yoga one gains proper access to the world and is therefore established in the right relationship to the world. Far from being denied or renounced, the world, for the yogin, has become transformed, properly engaged.

We need not read Patanjali as saying that the culmination of all yogic endeavour – *kaivalya* – is a static finality or inactive, isolated, solipsistic state of being. *Kaivalya* can be seen to incorporate an integrated, psychological consciousness along with the autonomy of pure consciousness, yet pure consciousness to which the realm of the *gunas* (e.g., psychophysical being) is completely attuned and integrated. On the level of individuality, the yogin has found his (her) place in the world at large, "fitting into the whole" (Klostermaier 319-37).

In the last chapter of the *Yogasutras* ("Kaivalya-Pada"), *kaivalya* (aloneness) is said to ensue upon the attainment of *dharmamegha-samadhi*, the "cloud of dharma" samadhi. At this level of practice, the yogin has abandoned any

[11] See the discussion on *ashtanga-yoga* in chapter 4 of Whicher, *The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*.

search for (or attachment to) reward or "profit" from his or her meditational practice; *akusida* (a non-acquisitive attitude) must take place at the highest level of yogic discipline:

> *prasaṃkhyāne'py akusīdasya sarvathā vivekakhyāter dharmameghaḥ samadhiḥ* (Agashe 202; YS IV.29)

Vyasa emphasises that the identity of *purusha* is not something to be *upadeya* (acquired) or *heya* (discarded):

> *tatra hātuḥ svarūpamupādeyaṃ vā heyaṃ vā na bhavitumarhati* (Agashe 78; YB II.15)

The perspective referred to as "Patanjali Yoga Darshana" culminates in a permanent state of clear "seeing" brought about through the discipline of Yoga. Yoga thus incorporates both an end state or "goal" and a process.[12]

Dharmamegha-samadhi presupposes that the yogin has cultivated *para-vairagya* (higher dispassion) – the means to the enstatic consciousness realised in *asamprajnata-samadhi* (YB I.18). Thus, *dharmamegha-samadhi* is more or less a synonym of *asamprajnata-samadhi* and can even be understood as the consummate phase of the awakening disclosed in enstasy, the final step on the long and arduous yogic journey to authentic identity and "aloneness" (Feuerstein, *The Philosophy of Classical Yoga* 98). A permanent identity shift – from the perspective of the human personality to *purusha* – takes place. Now free from any dependence on or subordination to knowledge or *vritti*, and detached from the world of *samyoga* (misidentification), the yogin yet retains the purified *gunic* powers of virtue including illuminating "knowledge of all" (YS III.49; III.54), due to purified *sattva*, non-afflicted activity (YS IV.7; YS IV.30), due to purified *rajas*, and a stable body-form due to purified *tamas*.

The *Yogasutras* declare: *tataḥ kleśakarmanivṛttiḥ* or "From that [*dharmamegha-samadhi*] there is the cessation of afflicted action"(Agashe

[12] Thus the term "yoga" (like the terms *nirodha* and samadhi) is ambiguous in that it means both the process of purification and illumination and the final result of liberation or "aloneness." Due to Yoga's traditional praxis-orientation it becomes all too easy to reduce Yoga to a "means only" approach to well-being and spiritual enlightenment. In the light of its popularity in the Western world today in which technique and practice have been emphasised, often to the exclusion of philosophical/theoretical understanding and a proper pedagogical context, there is a great danger in simply reifying practice, whereby practice becomes something the ego does for the sake of its own security. Seen here, practice – often then conceived as a superior activity in relation to all other activities – becomes all-important in that through the activity called "practice" the ego hopes and strives to become "enlightened." Practice thus becomes rooted in a future-oriented perspective, largely motivated out of a fear of not becoming enlightened; it degenerates into a form of selfishly appropriated activity where "means" become ends-in-themselves. Moreover, human relationships become instruments for the greater "good" of Self-realisation. Thus rationalised, relationships are seen as having only a tentative nature. The search for enlightenment under the sway of this kind of instrumental rationality/reasoning (that is, the attempt to "gain" something from one's practice, i.e., enlightenment) never really goes beyond the level of the ego and its compulsive search for permanent security, which of course, according to Yoga thought, is an inherently afflicted state of affairs. To be sure, the concern of Yoga is to (re)discover *purusha*, to be restored to true identity, thus overcoming dissatisfaction, fear and misidentification by uprooting and eradicating the dis-ease of *avidya* (ignorance). Yet, as Halbfass puts it, true identity "cannot be really lost, forgotten or newly acquired" (252) for liberation "is not to be produced or accomplished in a literal sense, but only in a figurative sense" (251). Sufficient means for the *sattvification* of the mind are, however, both desirable and necessary in order to prepare the yogin for the necessary identity shift from egoity to *purusha*. By acknowledging that "aloneness" cannot be an acquired state resulting from, or caused by, yogic methods and techniques, and that *purusha* cannot be known (YB III.35), acquired or discarded/lost (YB II.15), Yoga, in effect, transcends its own result-orientation as well as the categories of means and ends.

202; YS IV.30).[13] Hence the binding influence of the *gunas* in the form of the afflictions, past actions, and misguided relationships is overcome; what remains is a "cloud of dharma" which includes an "eternality of knowledge" free from all *avarana-mala* (impure covering) or veiling affliction and where "little (remains) to be known": *tadā sarvāvaraṇamalāpetasya jñ ānasyānantyājjñeyam alpam* (Agashe 203; YS IV.31). The eternality or endlessness of knowledge is better understood metaphorically rather than literally: it is not knowledge expanded to infinity but implies *purusha-realisation* which transcends the limitations and particulars of knowledge or *vritti*.

The culmination of the Yoga system is found when, following from *dharmamegha-samadhi*, the mind and actions are freed from misidentification and affliction and one is no longer deluded/confused with regard to one's *svarupa* (true form) or intrinsic identity. At this stage of practice the yogin is disconnected or in a state of *viyoga* from all patterns of action motivated by the ego. According to both Vyasa (YB IV.30):

kleśakarmanivṛttau jīvanneva vidvānvimukto bhavati

On cessation of afflicted action, the knower is released while yet living. (Agashe 202-203; YB IV.30)

and the sixteenth-century commentator Vijnana Bhikshu (Rukmani 123-24; YV IV.30),[14] one in whom this high state of purification takes place is designated as a *jivanmukta*: one who is liberated while still alive (i.e., embodied or living liberation).

By transcending the normative conventions and obligations of karmic behaviour, the yogin acts morally not as an extrinsic response and out of obedience to an external moral code of conduct, but as an intrinsic response and as a matter of natural, purified inclination. The stainless luminosity of pure consciousness is revealed as one's fundamental nature. The yogin does not act *samsarically* and ceases to act from the perspective of a delusive sense of self confined within *prakriti's* domain. Relinquishing all obsessive or selfish concern with the results of activity, the yogin remains wholly detached from the

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[13] Thus, it may be said that to dwell without defilement in a "cloud of dharma" is the culminating description by Patanjali of what the tradition later referred to as *jivanmukti* (living liberation). To be sure, there is a "brevity of description" in the *Yogasutras* regarding the state of liberation. Only sparingly, with reservation (one might add, caution) and mostly in metaphorical terms, does Patanjali speak about the qualities exhibited by the liberated yogin. Chapple provides three possible reasons for this "brevity of description" regarding living liberation in the context of the *Yogasutras* (and Samkhya, i.e., SK of Ishvara Krishna): (1) He states: "(T)he genre in which both texts were written does not allow for the sort of narrative and poetic embellishment found in the epics and Puranas." (2) Perhaps, as Chapple suggests "… a deliberate attempt has been made to guarantee that the recognition of a liberated being remains in the hands of a spiritual preceptor." What is to be noted here is that the oral and highly personalised lineage tradition within Yoga stresses the authority of the guru which guards against false claims to spiritual attainment on the part of others and thereby "helps to ensure the authenticity and integrity of the tradition." (3) A further reason for brevity "could hinge on the logical contradiction that arises due to the fact that the notion of self is so closely identified with *ahamkara* [the mistaken ego sense or afflicted identity]. It would be an oxymoron for a person to say [']I am liberated[']" ("Living Liberation in Samkhya and Yoga" 116). The *purusha* (self) is, of course, not an object which can be seen by itself thus laying emphasis, as Chapple points out, on the ineffable nature of the liberative state which transcends mind-content, all marks and activity itself.

[14] Elsewhere in his *Yogasarasamgraha* (17) Vijnana Bhikshu tells us that the yogin who is "established in the state of *dharmamegha-samadhi* is called a *jivanmukta*" (… *dharmameghaḥ samādhiḥ … asyāmavasthāyāṃ jīvanmukta ityucyate*). Vijnana Bhikshu is critical of Vedantins (i.e., Shankara's Advaita Vedanta school) who, he says, associate the *jivanmukta* with *avidya-klesha* (ignorance) – probably because of the liberated being's continued link with the body – despite Yoga's insistence on the complete overcoming of the afflictions.

egoic fruits of action.[15] This does not imply that the yogin loses all orientation for action. Only attachment (and compulsive, inordinate desire), not action itself, sets in motion the law of karma (moral causation) by which a person is implicated in *samsara*. The yogin is said to be non-attached to either virtue or non-virtue, and is no longer oriented within the egological patterns of thought as in the epistemically distorted condition of *samyoga*. This does not mean, as some scholars have misleadingly concluded, that the spiritual adept or yogin is free to commit immoral acts (Zaehner 97-98), or that the yogin is motivated by selfish concerns (Scharfstein 131-32).

Actions must not only be executed in the spirit of unselfishness (i.e., sacrifice) or detachment, they must also be ethically sound, reasonable and justifiable. Moreover, the yogin's spiritual journey – far from being an "a-moral process"(Feuerstein, *The Yoga-Sutra of Patanjali: A New Translation* 81) – is a highly moral process! The yogin's commitment to the *sattvification* of consciousness, including the cultivation of moral virtues such as *karuna* or compassion:

> *maitrīoperate.karuṇāmudiopekṣāṇāṃ-sukhaduḥkhapuṇyāpuṇyaviṣayāṇāṃ-bhāvanātaś cittaprasādanam*
>
> The mind is made pure and clear from the cultivation of friendliness, compassion, happiness and equanimity in conditions or toward objects of joy, sorrow, merit or demerit respectively. (Agashe 38; YS I.33)

and ahimsa or non-violence (YS II.35), is not an "a-moral" enterprise, nor is it an expression of indifference, aloofness, or an uncaring attitude to others. Moral disciplines are engaged as a natural outgrowth of *sattvic* (intelligent) self-understanding, insight, and commitment to self-transcendence that takes consciousness out of (ecstasis) its identification with the rigid structure of the monadic ego, thereby reversing the inveterate tendency of this ego to inflate itself at the expense of its responsibility in relation to others.

Having defined the "goal" of Yoga as *kaivalya* (aloneness), the question must now be asked: what kind of "aloneness" was Patanjali talking about? "Aloneness," I suggest, is not the isolation of the *drashtri*, *purusha* (seer) separate from the *drishya*, *prakriti* (seeable), as is unfortunately far too often maintained as the goal of Yoga. Instead it refers to the "aloneness" of the power of "seeing" (YS II.20, 25) in its innate purity and clarity without any epistemological distortion and moral defilement. The cultivation of *nirodha* uproots the compulsive tendency to reify the world and oneself (i.e., that pervading sense of separate ego irrevocably divided from the encompassing world) with an awareness that reveals the transcendent, yet immanent seer or *purusha*. Through clear *drishi* (seeing) the purpose of Yoga is fulfilled, and the yogin, free from all misidentification and impure karmic residue (as in the former contextual sphere of *chittavritti*), gains full, immediate access to the world. By accessing the world in such an open and direct manner, in effect, "uniting" (epistemologically) with the world, the yogin ceases to be encumbered by egoism (i.e., *asmita* and its egoic attitudes and identity patterns), which, enmeshed in conflict and confusion and

[15] This is the essence of Krishna's teaching in the *Bhagavadgita* on *karmayoga*; see, for example, BG IV.20.

holding itself as separate from the world, misappropriates the world.

Yoga can be seen to unfold – in samadhi – states of epistemic oneness that reveal the non-separation of knower, knowing, and the known (YS I.41), grounding our identity in a non-afflicted mode of action. *Kaivalya* implies a power of "seeing" in which the dualisms rooted in our egocentric patterns of attachment, aversion, fear, and so forth, have been transformed into unselfish ways of being with others (YS I.33). The psychological, ethical, and social implications of this kind of identity transformation are, needless to say, immense. I am suggesting that Yoga does not destroy or anaesthetise our feelings and emotions thereby encouraging neglect and indifference toward others. On the contrary, the process of *nirodha* (cessation) steadies one for a life of compassion, discernment, and service informed by a "seeing" that is able to understand (literally meaning "to stand among, hence observe") – and is in touch with – the needs of others. What seems especially relevant for our understanding of Yoga ethics is the enhanced capacity generated in Yoga for empathic identification with the object one seeks to understand. This is a far cry from the portrayal of the yogin as a disengaged figure, psychologically and physically removed from the human relational sphere, who, in an obstinate and obtrusive fashion, severs all ties with the world. Such an image of a wise yogin merely serves to circumscribe our vision of humanity, and, if anything else, stifle the spirit by prejudicing a spiritual, abstract (and disembodied) realm over and against nature and our human embodiment. In Yoga philosophy "seeing" is not only a cognitive term but implies purity of mind, that is, it has moral content and value. Nor is *jnana*, *vidya* (knowledge) in the Yoga tradition to be misconstrued as a "bloodless" or "heartless" gnosis.

I wish to argue therefore that through the necessary transformation of consciousness brought about in samadhi, an authentic and fruitful coherence of self-identity, perception, and activity emerges out of the former fragmented consciousness in *samyoga*. If Patanjali's perception of the world of forms and differences had been destroyed or discarded, how could he have had such insight into Yoga and the intricacies and subtle nuances of the unenlightened state?[16] If through *nirodha* the individual form and the whole world had been cancelled for Patanjali, he would more likely have spent the rest of his days in the inactivity and isolation of transcendent oblivion rather than present the Yoga philosophy to others! Rather than being handicapped by the exclusion of thinking, perceiving, experiencing, or activity, the liberated yogin actualises the potential to live a fully integrated life in the world. I conclude here that there is no reason why the liberated yogin cannot be portrayed as a vital, creative, thoughtful, empathetic, balanced, happy, and wise person. Having adopted an integrative orientation to life, the enlightened being can endeavour to transform, enrich, and ennoble the world. I am therefore suggesting that there is a rich affective, moral, and cognitive as well

[16] Although the historical identity of Patanjali the Yoga-master is not known, we are assuming that Patanjali was, as the tradition would have it, an enlightened Yoga adept.

as spiritual potential inherent in the realisation of *purusha*, the "aloneness" of the power of consciousness/seeing.

Yoga presupposes the integration of knowledge and activity; there can be no scission between *theoria* and praxis. The *Yogasutras* is a philosophical text where praxis is deemed to be essential. Without actual practice the theory that informs Yoga would have no authentic meaning. Yet without examination and reflection there would be no meaningful striving for liberation, no "goal," as it were, to set one's sight on. In an original, inspiring, and penetrating style, Patanjali bridges metaphysics and ethics, transcendence and immanence, and contributes to the Hindu fold, a form of philosophical investigation that, to borrow J. Taber's descriptive phrase for another context, can properly be called a "transformative philosophy." That is to say, it is a philosophical perspective which "does not stand as an edifice isolated from experience; it exists only insofar as it is realized in experience" (Taber 26).

Conclusion

To conclude, it can be said that *purusha* indeed has some precedence over *prakriti* in Patanjali's system, for *purusha* is what is ordinarily "missing" or concealed in human life and is ultimately the state of consciousness one must awaken to in Yoga. The liberated state of *kaivalya* (aloneness) need not denote either an ontological superiority of *purusha* or an exclusion of *prakriti*. *Kaivalya* can be positively construed as an integration of both principles – an integration that, I have argued, is what is most important for Yoga. I have proposed that the *Yogasutras* does not uphold a "path" of liberation that ultimately renders *purusha* and *prakriti* incapable of "co-operating" together. Rather, the *Yogasutras* seeks to "unite" these two principles without the presence of any defiled understanding, to bring them "together," properly aligning them in a state of balance, harmony, and a clarity of knowledge in the integrity of being and action.

The purified mind, one that has been transformed through yogic discipline, is certainly no ordinary worldly awareness nor is it eliminated for the sake of pure consciousness. To confuse (as many interpretations of Yoga have unfortunately done) the underlining purificatory processes involved in the cessation of ignorance/afflicted identity as being the same thing as (or as necessitating the need for) a radical elimination of our psychophysical being – the *prakritic* vehicle through which consciousness discloses itself – is, I suggest, to misunderstand the intent of the *Yogasutras* itself. There are strong grounds for arguing (as I have done) that through "cessation" *prakriti* herself (in the form of the *gunic* constitutional make-up of the yogin's body-mind) is liberated from the grip of ignorance. Vyasa explicitly states (YB II.18) that emancipation happens in the mind and does not literally apply to *purusha* – which is by definition already free and therefore has no intrinsic need to be released from the fetters of *samsaric* existence.

Both morality and perception (cognition) are essential channels through which human consciousness, far from being negated or suppressed, is transformed and illuminated. Yoga combines discerning knowledge with an emotional, affective, and moral sensibility allowing for a participatory epistemology that incorporates the moral amplitude for empathic

identification with the world, that is, with the objects or persons one seeks to understand. The enhanced perception gained through Yoga must be interwoven with Yoga's rich affective and moral dimensions to form a spirituality that does not become entangled in a web of antinomianism, but which retains the integrity and vitality to transform our lives and the lives of others in an effective manner. In Yoga proper there can be no support, ethically or pedagogically, for the misappropriation or abuse of *prakriti* for the sake of freedom or *purusha-realisation*. By upholding an integration of the moral and the mystical, Yoga supports a reconciliation of the prevalent tension within Hinduism between (1) *pravritti* or spiritual engagement and self-identity within the world, and (2) *nivritti* or spiritual disengagement from worldliness and self-identity that transcends the world. Yoga discerns and teaches a balance between these two apparently conflicting orientations.

This paper has attempted to counter the radically dualistic, isolationistic, and ontologically oriented interpretations of Yoga presented by many scholars – where the full potentialities of our human embodiment are constrained within a radical, rigid, dualistic metaphysical structure – and propose instead an open-ended, morally and epistemologically oriented hermeneutic that frees Yoga of the long-standing conception of spiritual isolation, disembodiment, self-denial, and world-negation and thus from its pessimistic image. This interpretation does not impute that *kaivalya* denotes a final incommensurability between spirit and matter. While Patanjali can be understood as having adopted a provisional, practical, dualistic metaphysics, there is no proof that his system either ends in duality or eliminates the possibility for an ongoing cooperative duality. Yoga is not simply "*purusha-realisation*"; it equally implies "getting it right with *prakriti*."

As well as being one of the seminal texts on yogic technique and transformative/liberative approaches within Asian Indian philosophy, Patanjali's *Yogasutras* has to this day remained one of the most influential spiritual guides in Hinduism. In addition to a large number of people within India, millions of Westerners are actively practicing some form of Yoga influenced by Patanjali's thought, clearly demonstrating Yoga's relevance for today as a discipline that can transcend cultural, religious, and philosophical barriers. The universal and universalising potential of Yoga makes it one of India's finest contributions to our struggle for self-definition, moral integrity, and spiritual renewal today. The main purpose of this essay has been to consider a fresh approach in which to re-examine and reassess classical Yoga philosophy, and to help to articulate in a fuller way what I have elsewhere referred to as the integrity of the Yoga darshana (*The Integrity of the Yoga Darshana*). Thus, it is my hope that some of the suggestions presented here can function as a catalyst for bringing Patanjali's thought into a more fruitful dialogue and encounter with other religious and philosophical traditions both within and outside of India.

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"Religion" and "Religious Freedom": Towards an Indic Understanding

Arvind Sharma

I

Introduction

IN THIS PAPER I would like to advance three propositions:

1. That the word religion, as it is currently employed in English language discourse around the world, is parochial (as opposed to global) in orientation;
2. That therefore the use of the word to refer to the reality it claims to describe as it exists around the world distorts this reality, with serious policy consequences;
3. That the examination of the correlative term dharma from within the Indic civilisation helps identify one dimension of such distortion with precision and enables one to propose policy recommendations which would help overcome the effects of such distortion.

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Before I proceed to the discussion of the three propositions, I would like to offer two clarifications.

1. The word religion is being used here not in the philosophically abstract sense of what is religion and how one might define it, but in the historically concrete sense of *a* religion, that is to say, a specific religious tradition, such as Christianity or Buddhism, as employed by the Western academia and media;
2. The appropriateness of the term religion to describe this reality is being questioned from a *global* perspective, that is, in a geographical way, rather than from a *universal* perspective with its philosophical undertones and overtones. Hence the issue addressed is the following: does the word religion correctly describe the religious traditions as found around the globe and not just within the experience of the West? It does not involve a

consideration of such matters as whether one can meaningfully speak of religion that is not just a particular religion, and so on.

II

What does it mean to say, or claim, that the word religion, as it is used in the English-speaking world today, is parochial in its orientation?

Perhaps if the word "Western" were substituted for the word "parochial" in the statement made above, then the implications of the proposition would stand out in bolder relief. What is being claimed here is that when the word religion is used by the Western academia and media such usage *also* implies a certain concept of what a religion is. It is not a neutral category. This point may be explained in terms of pharmacological vocabulary as involving the difference between a brand name and the generic name of a substance. It is the difference between calling something aspirin and calling it Bayer's. In more quotidian terms it is like calling every car a Ford. That one simply cannot afford to do that could be illustrated with a simple example. If I begin to call all cars "Fords" then when I see a car which is not a Ford, but looks like a Ford, such as a Chevrolet, I will call it Ford-like, and one which does not look like it, such as a Mercedes, I will call unFord-like. The proper procedure would be to employ the category "car" and not Ford *ab initio* in order to avoid falling into such a cumbersome error; to consider Ford, Chevrolet, and Mercedes as three types of cars rather than describe the last two by the extent to which they resemble, or do not resemble, a Ford. This means that the word Ford would have to be *unprivileged* if we want to move towards a neutral description of cars, especially if the vocabulary of describing all cars has already been developed on that basis by owners of Fords. What the Fordists do is use a specimen as a criterion of description, instead of treating it as a specimen. Thus the paradigm- and word-shift would have to go hand in hand here.

There might be an objection at this point that the analogy is unsound. The modern West does not dub other religions of the world as Christianity-like or Christianity-unlike. Note that such a description is indeed possible from a Christianity-centric point of view. For instance, in accordance with such a mapping of the religious terrain, Judaism and Islam could be classified as Christianity-like and the religions of India, and perhaps China as well, as Christianity-unlike. It could then be claimed that our charge would hold if this were how the modern West classified world religions. The example of the cars of various models cited above would apply if such were the case but the modern West also refers to Christianity as a religion, just as it refers to Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. Hence the example does not fit the case.

The criticism is crucial and goes to the heart of the matter. The point to remember here is that in addressing the word religion and its provincial character, what we are dealing with, at the moment, is not so much the "Christian" West as the "secular" West, and it is on account of this difference that for the organising category of "Christianity," one now substitutes the word "religion." This is an important development, the significance of which has not gone unnoticed by scholars. I would like to substantiate this point with the help of the two citations that follow, each of which is a reflection on the "secular" movement within the Christian West.

Wilfred Cantwell Smith (1916-2000) is well-known for pointing out how the word "religion" became reified in the course of the intellectual evolution of the modern West.[1]

It is not as often recognised that he also connects this development with the rise of secularism. He writes:

> Another example of a tie between the process of conceptual reifying and a process of actual crystallizing in human history and society, is that of "religion" as a generic abstract. The modern West's adoption of this concept, though misleading for an interpretation of the religious life of the Aztecs, the classical Hindus, mediaeval Europe, contemporary Bushmen, and most other peoples, is nonetheless neither fortuitous nor absurd. Its rise in recent centuries in the West has had to do with a great process of differentiation in those recent centuries in that area – a process whose diffusion around the world can be discerned in the present century. This is a process whereby the complexity and proliferating novelty of life have advanced relentlessly and spectacularly. A result has been that religious traditions that were once in practice and are still perhaps, in ideal, coterminous with human life in all its comprehensiveness, have actually found themselves supplemented more and more by considerations from other or newer sources, so that the religious seems to be one facet of a person's life alongside many others.
>
> The rise of what is called secularism (the term was coined in Europe in 1851) and its spread throughout the world are indeed a symptom of an evolving sociological situation in which an earlier cohesiveness or integrity of man's social and personal life, once religiously expressed and religiously sanctified, has been fragmented. In this situation those who wish to preserve that quality of their existence to which their religious tradition nurtures their sensitivity, are often able to do so only as one item in an otherwise heterogeneous or distracted life. The concept "religion" which designates, however vaguely, one aspect of life among others bears testimony to this differentiation.
>
> Once again, any new conceptualisation must do at least equal justice to the modern situation that has arisen, as well as deal more adequately with the perceptive religious man's unwillingness – or the

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[1] His position in this respect may be summarised below:

> In his important book *The Meaning and End of Religion*, Wilfred Cantwell Smith challenges the familiar concept of "a religion," upon which much of the traditional problem of conflicting religious truth claims rest. He emphasises that what we call a religion – an empirical entity that can be traced historically and mapped geographically – is a human phenomenon. Christianity, Hinduism, Judaism, Buddhism, Islam, and so on are human creations whose history is part of the wider history of human culture. Cantwell Smith traces the development of the concept of a religion as a clear and bounded historical phenomenon and shows that the notion, far from being universal and self-evident, is a distinctively western invention which has been exported to the rest of the world. "It is," he says, summarising the outcome of his detailed historical argument, "a surprisingly modern aberration for anyone to think that Christianity is true or that Islam is – since the Enlightenment, basically, when Europe began to postulate religions as intellectualistic systems, patterns of doctrine, so that they could for the first time be labelled 'Christianity' and 'Buddhism,' and could be called true or false." The names by which we know the various "religions" today were in fact (with the exception of "Islam") invented in the eighteenth century, and before they were imposed by the influence of the West upon the peoples of the world no one had thought of himself or herself as belonging to one of a set of competing systems of belief concerning which it is possible to ask, "Which of these systems is the true one?" This notion of religions as mutually exclusive entities with their own characteristics and histories – although it now tends to operate as a habitual category of our thinking – may well be an example of the illicit reification, the turning of good adjectives into bad substantives, to which the Western mind is prone and against which contemporary philosophy has warned us. In this case a powerful but distorting conceptuality has helped to create phenomena answering to it, namely the religions of the world seeing themselves and each other as rival ideological communities. (Hick 110)

> careful observer's inability – to segment off one area of his life to which he will confine, in theory or in practice, the relevance of his faith.
>
> I do not contend, then, that the old concepts are meaningless; rather that they are imprecise and liable to distort what they are asked to represent. (124)

This development in the "intellectual" sphere has its own counterpart in the "academic" sphere, which is identified by John H. Hick as follows:

> In many universities and colleges there are departments devoted to studying the history and varieties of this phenomenon and the contribution that it has brought to our culture in general. Among the ideas treated in this connection, along with cult, priesthood, taboo, and many others, is the concept of God. For academic study, God is thus conceived as a subtopic within the larger subject of religion.
>
> At a more popular level religion is widely regarded, in a psychological mode, as a human activity whose general function is to enable the individual to achieve harmony both internally and in relation to the environment. One of the distinctive ways in which religion fulfills this function is by preserving and promoting certain great ideas or symbols that possess the power to invigorate our finer aspirations. The most important and enduring of these symbols is God. Thus, at both academic and popular levels God is, in effect, defined in terms of religion, as one of the concepts with which religion works, rather than religion being defined in terms of God, as the field of people's varying responses to a real supernatural being. (91)

He further claims:

> This displacement of "God" by "Religion" as the focus of a wide realm of discourse has brought with it a change in the character of the questions that are most persistently asked in this area. Concerning God, the traditional question has naturally been whether God exists or is real. This is not a question that arises with regard to religion. It is obvious that religion exists; the important queries concern the purposes that it serves in human life, whether it ought to be cultivated, and if so, in what directions it may most profitably be developed. Under the pressure of these concerns, the question of the truth of religious beliefs has fallen into the background and the issue of their practical usefulness has come forward instead to occupy the center of attention. (91)

This intellectual and academic appropriation of the word religion tends to conceal the fact of how Christian such a notion of religion is. In place of the Christian religion we are now, in fact, operating with a Christian conception of religion. S. N. Balagangadhara writes:

> In the name of science and ethnology, the biblical themes have become our regular stock-in-trade: that God gave religion to humankind has become a cultural universal in the guise that all cultures have a religion; the theme that God gave one religion to humanity has taken the form and belief that all religions have something in common; that God implanted a sense of divinity is now a secular truth in the form of an anthropological, specifically human ability to have a religious experience … One has become a Christian precisely to the degree Christianity ceases being specifically Christian in the process of its secularization. We may not have had our baptisms or recognize Jesus as the saviour: but this is how we prosecute the Christians. The retribution for this is also in proportion: the pagans themselves do not know how pagan they really are. We have, it is true, no need for specifically Christian doctrines. But then, that is because all our dogmas are in fact Christian. (246)

Scholars in the study of religion are

beginning to display an increasing awareness of this fact. The entry under the item "religion," in the *Encyclopedia of Religion*, which appeared in 1987 and has since become the standard reference work in the field, illustrates the point well. The author of the entry is Winston L. King, who starts out by saying:

> **Religion:** The very attempt to define *religion*, to find some distinctive or possibly unique essence or set of qualities that distinguish the "religious" from the remainder of human life, is primarily a Western concern. The attempt is a natural consequence of the Western speculative, intellectualistic, and scientific disposition. It is also the product of the dominant Western religious mode, what is called the Judeo-Christian climate or, more accurately, the theistic inheritance from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The theistic form of belief in this tradition, even when downgraded culturally, is formative of the dichotomous Western view of religion. That is, the basic structure of theism is essentially a distinction between a transcendent deity and all else, between the creator and his creation, between God and man.
>
> Even Western thinkers who recognize their cultural bias find it hard to escape, because the assumptions of theism permeate the linguistic structures that shape their thought. For example, the term *holy* comes from linguistic roots signifying wholeness, perfection, well-being; the unholy, then, is the fragmentary, the imperfect, the ailing. Sacredness is the quality of being set apart from the usual or ordinary; its antonym, *profane*, literally means "outside the *fane*" (ME, "sacred place"). Thus every sanctuary – synagogue, church, mosque – is a concrete physical embodiment of this separation of the religious from all else. So too, in a more general sense the sacred is what is specifically set apart for holy or religious use; the secular is what is left over, the world outside, the current age and its fashions and concerns. This thoroughgoing separation has been institutionalized in a multitude of forms: sacred rites including sacraments; sacred books and worship paraphernalia; holy days; sacred precincts and buildings; special modes of life and dress; religious fellowships and orders; and so on *ad infinitum*. (282)

He also asserts:

> Many practical and conceptual difficulties arise when one attempts to apply such a dichotomous pattern across the board to all cultures. In primitive societies, for instance, what the West calls religious is such an integral part of the total ongoing way of life that it is never experienced or thought of as something separable or narrowly distinguishable from the rest of the pattern. Or if the dichotomy is applied to that multifaceted entity called Hinduism, it seems that almost everything can be and is given a religious significance by some sect. Indeed, in a real sense everything that is is divine; existence *per se* appears to be sacred. It is only that the ultimately real manifests itself in a multitude of ways – in the set-apart and the ordinary, in god and so-called devil, in saint and sinner. The real is apprehended at many levels in accordance with the individual's capacity.
>
> The same difficulty arises in another form when considering Taoist, Confucian, and Shinto cultures. These cultures are characterized by what J. J. M. de Groot termed "universism": a holiness, goodness, and perfection of the natural order that has been misunderstood, distorted, and falsified by shallow minds and errant cultural customs. The religious life here is one of harmony with both the natural and human orders, a submersion of individuality in an organic relationship

> and in an inwardly experienced oneness with them. And Buddhism in all its forms denies the existence of a transcendent creator-deity in favor of an indefinable, nonpersonal, absolute source or dimension that can be experienced as the depth of human inwardness. This, of course, is not to forget the multitudinous godlings, *bodhisattvas*, and spirits who are given ritual reverence in popular adaptations of the high religion to human need. (282)

The concept of religion one would associate with Christianity thus implies that religion is something (1) conclusive; (2) exclusionary and (3) separative. In other words, to be a Christian means that you have the final truth (*conclusive*); that you belong to a community of Christians which shares in it while others do not (*exclusionary*); and that a religion constitutes a distinct component of culture and is separable from it, so that anyone belonging to any culture could become a Christian (*separative*). As the word passes from Christian into secular usage, its first implication gets attenuated, in the sense that it is admitted that not just Christianity but other religions may also claim to possess the ultimate truth. Thus the description of Christianity as a religion converts its "truth" into a "truth-claim"; we revert to the original Christian claim as soon as we call it *the* religion instead of *a* religion. Religion with a "the" is the Christian article of faith; with an "a" it is a secular article of faith.

III

In its secular usage, however, the word religion as understood in its triple mode in Christianity, has tended to retain only two associations: that religion is *exclusionary*, and that it is *separative*. This is most apparent in its usage in such a document as the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 18 of this declaration is generally regarded as enshrining the right to "religious" freedom. It reads as follows:

> Article 18
>
> Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance. (Stahnke and Martin 59)

It is worth noting here that the right to change one's religion is immediately recognised, but not the right to retain one's religion in the same way. The question of the right of changing "religions" only arises if they are exclusive, for change means that a border has to be crossed. And the idea that one "can change" one's religion arises from the fact of it being something separative. That is to say, I, as an individual can separate myself from the society around me and start believing in something else independently of other members of that society. Religion is thus separative in two senses: (1) it can be separated from other areas of life and (2) the individual professing it can separate himself or herself from the larger social unit to which he or she belongs. A third sense is also implied: that one religion is "separable" from another.

All these aspects mesh together as constitutive of a concept of religion that holds true for a "missionary religion, or denomination." It might be argued that such a position could not be called Western because while this may be true of Christianity and Islam, it is not true of Judaism. For Judaism is not a missionary religion in the sense that it does not seek proselytes the way Christianity and Islam do. Nevertheless

Judaism is also exclusive and separative in the sense that it accepts converts, and what is most important, maintains that you cannot be a Jew at the same time as being a Christian and/or a Muslim. In other words, the concept of religion as something "exclusionary" applies to Abrahamic religions across the board. The difference between Christianity and Islam on the one hand, and Judaism, on the other, lies in the degree of enthusiasm with which this sense of exclusion is pursued, specially on the question of whether such exclusion also possesses soteriological implications.

We have so far tried to argue that the relationship between exclusion and separation is correlational – both go together. But the degree of freedom of belief permitted within Judaism allows one to venture to conclude that the relationship between the two could also be inverse: that is to say, that the less sharp the distinction between religion and culture within a community – that is, the less separative it is in this sense – the less exclusive it tends to be in terms of religion. But the less the separation between religion and culture in a community the greater the extent of the organic connection of the individual to the larger social unit – and the more severe the implication for that unit of the conversion of the individual to another faith-community. Significantly, this is a point often overlooked by Christian evangelism.

There is thus a distinct connection between the naturally organic association of the individual to the unit into which the individual is born and the degree of exclusiveness entertained in terms of faith-commitment: the less separative the situation in terms of religion and culture, the less exclusive it is in terms of faith-commitment. But this is only possible if entertaining a new faith or religion does not involve the denial of one's original faith or religion. If such a denial were not involved, however, there would be no need to spell out the right to change "one's religion" the way it is formulated in human rights documents.

Thus two distinct universes of discourse emerge in terms of whether a change of religion involves the negation of a previous allegiance or not. But if no such negation is required then the question of change hardly remains an issue, and thus, the right to it. In such a situation the right to religious freedom takes the opposite form – the right not to change one's religion, the right to continue to belong to a community that does not distinguish between religion and culture and within which faith-stances are not exclusionary.

Perhaps it is the "individualistic" orientation of the human rights discourse that has obscured this dimension of the problem. It is worth noting that my right to freedom of religion even as an individual takes on a different form if I belong to such an open religio-cultural community. My right to freedom of religion then assumes the following two additional forms: (1) my right to *retain* my religion rather than to change it, and (2) my right to *accept* any other religion without having to change to it, in the sense of my having to sever links with any other culture or faith. Thus I should be able to claim that I am a Christian *without* having to say I am not a Hindu.

At this point another question arises: does this qualify as "change"? Do I need a special formulation to safeguard this right of mine: that I have the freedom to *accept* any religion, without having to "change" to it. The issue needs to be pursued further because two concepts of community seem to be involved – a fact

which may have been overlooked by the framers of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* with its tendency to emphasise individual rights.

Winston L. King points out how the so-called Western religions involve a distinct concept of community. He writes:

> There is one other important result of the Western concept and practice of religion, here alluded to in passing: the religious community, distinct and more or less set apart from the environing society. This is not absolutely unique to Western religiosity, for in almost every culture there are those individuals believed to have unusual capacities and powers – the soothsayers, shamans, witch doctors, medicine men, and other specialists who are set apart from all others by their powers and who use them in a professional manner. Likewise in most cultures there are those temporary and voluntary groups of initiates into secret or occult fellowships who take upon themselves prescribed special obligations, diets, psychosomatic disciplines, and the like.
>
> But none of these achieves the form or distinctive qualities of the congregations of synagogue, church, or mosque. There is more and other here than the geographical togetherness of worshippers at a Hindu or Buddhist temple or the cultic togetherness of a tribal society. In one sense, a Western-style congregation is a "gathered people," a group of persons who have been divinely called to and have consciously chosen to follow this particular faith rather than other possible faiths or nonfaith. (That geographical, historical, and social factors greatly modify the actuality of the factor of choice is to be understood, but being chosen and choosing remain the ideal model.)
>
> Such groups have their chosen leaders, carry on joint worship periodically as well as other corporate activities, and evangelize for their faith among others. Thus, being a member of a body of believers – a term that betrays the Western theistic emphasis on doctrine – separates individuals to some extent from others in the environing society. And the professional teachers and ritualists – rabbis, ministers, priests, and to some extent mullahs and imams – are by their dress and mode of life even more separated from "the world" than the devout laity are. (283)

He goes on to say:

> Again, this special type of grouping, though produced in part by many other factors as well, is a distinctive product of the Western theistic dichotomous conception of religion as a set of beliefs and practices that are different from surrounding beliefs and practices and that embody a special relation to deity, that transcendent other. The very term *religion* originally indicated a bond of scruple uniting those who shared it closely to each other. Hence *religion* suggests both separation and a separative fellowship. How, then, is religion to be conceptually handled for the purposes of thought and discussion, since the very term itself is so deeply ingrained with specifically Western cultural presuppositions? (283)

This helps clarify why, in the Western concept of religion, "exclusion" and "separation" go together, thus making freedom to change one's religion the primary metaphor of religious freedom. It is not enough for one to say that one is a Jew or a Christian or a Muslim; it also means that one must be part of mutually exclusive social groupings associated with the synagogue, the church and the mosque, respectively. It is not possible for one to claim to be a Christian while standing in a synagogue; or a Muslim while standing in a church. When one visualises this happening then one gets close to the heart of the problem, for an analogous

situation, so abnormal in terms of the Western concept of religion, is normal from the Indic point of view. Thus a Hindu could freely admit to being a believer in Buddha, and Mahavira and the Sikh gurus *without* formally being part of those respective communities and members of those communities could make the same claim in relation to the Hindu, without astonishing the Hindu.

To pursue the point from an Indic standpoint then: the primary metaphor of religious freedom would be the right *not* to have to change one's religion or, to put it more positively, the right to retain it, and at another level the primary metaphor of religious freedom would be the freedom to accept another religion without having to formally convert to it.

The Indic word dharma, often used to translate the English word religion into Indian languages, helps in clarifying the situation. It is used at two levels in classical Hinduism – at the level of one's station or stage in life, or at the level of humanity in general. In the former sense it is known as *varnashrama* dharma and in the latter sense as *sadharana* or *samanya* dharma. Thus in one sense it denotes very specific values – specific to one's profession or gender – which fall "below" the radar screen of the English word religion and in the other sense it denotes purely common human values like truth and non-violence, which lie "above" the radar screen constituted by the specificity of a religious tradition and rise to the level of universal religion or religion of humanity. In such a matrix, once again, changing one's "dharma" does not make much sense. One may change one's station in life, or pass through various stages of life. These changes would not count as changing one's "religion" in the English sense. At the other level also, changing one's "religion" makes little sense for one cannot change one's religion from one of truth to one of falsehood. The choice here is not among religions but between religion and irreligion. Hence the freedom to change one's religion in this sense does not resonate within such a matrix.

But even at the new "Western" level that has now been introduced in India, the idea of changing one's religion fails to impress because of the neo-Hindu doctrine of the validity of all approaches to the divine.

We set out by describing the Christian concept of religion as conclusive, exclusionary and separative, and we noted that in its secular adaptation the "conclusive" component became somewhat eroded but the other two – exclusionary and separative – were retained. We then noted that while the exclusionary and separative components are correlated in the Western religions, this need not necessarily be so. Judaism showed the crack through which light from the East came in. In this light it became clear that in the case of modern Hinduism even the exclusive element does not work. The concept of "change" must involve either a change from one exclusivity to another, or from exclusivity to non-exclusivity. Note, however, that for one already in a state of non-exclusivity such change makes little sense, unless one wishes to abandon such non-exclusivity.

The Indic perspective thus introduces another understanding of religious freedom of which the two components are: (1) that such freedom means my freedom to retain my religion, and (2) my freedom to accept another religion without having to convert to it.

IV

It could be claimed however that the discussion so far only provides an Indic perspective on the understanding of the word religion. To the extent that it is Indocentric, it therefore possesses only a regional rather than a global significance.

To move the argument along, therefore, let us call the Indic position the "dharmic" position in contrast to the "religionist" position. If non-exclusiveness in terms of affiliation to a religion is the essence of the "dharmic" situation then, in fact, the religious reality of the Far East could well be considered dharmic. The case is best presented in the words of Julia Ching. She writes:

> A major difference between East Asian religious life and that of India and the West is that its communities are not completely separate. If you ask a Japanese, for instance, whether he or she is a believer in a particular religion, you may get the answer "no" (even the Japanese word for "no" is not as tightly defined a denial as is "no" in English). However, if you ask whether he or she adheres to Shinto, Buddhism, and Confucianism, you may get the answer "yes" (albeit again a bit noncommittal compared with the English "yes"). Many Japanese follow more than one religion, even though they do not consider themselves very religious.
>
> Much the same can be said of the Chinese, the Koreans, or the Vietnamese. At issue is the inseparability between religion and culture in East Asia, as well as the syncretism or combination that characterizes all the major religions there. East Asians all assert the importance of cosmic and social harmony. Since harmony is highly valued, each of the religious traditions tends to meet some of the needs of the people. In spite of occasional religious conflicts, all tend to work together in a larger cultural and social context.
>
> Some scholars go so far as to say that the Chinese and Japanese have no religion, since their "religions" do not make the exclusive claims to truth and dogma so characteristic of Western religions. Others claim that China and Japan have no religion because their civilization is basically areligious and this-worldly. Still others, while granting that religion is present in East Asian civilization, find it so entwined in the culture itself that the two have become inseparable; they hold therefore that speaking about religion in such places as China is a useless exercise. Others are not always sure whether they should speak of "religion" in the singular or the plural. (348)

Further elaborating her point, she says

> We should make our own position clear. There is ground for confusion, we grant, because of the close ties between religion and culture. It is not easy to separate religion and culture in our discussion. This does not mean, however, that East Asian civilizations are areligious. Some people dismiss customs and rituals as superstitious, but others in the same culture see them as practical means of securing benefit in life. We should be aware that definitions of these traditions in the region are fluid, as distinct from the roles of religions of West Asian origin, like Christianity or Islam. Moreover, we think that the word "religion" need not be defined in exclusivist terms, in theist terms, or even in doctrinal terms.
>
> We consider as religion all forces and institutions that function in East Asian society as does "religion" in Western society. That is why we include Confucianism and rival teachings in our discussions, while acknowledging that some regard them more as philosophy than as religion. We also call this section "East Asian Religions" in the plural because traditions exercising certain roles of

> "religion" can be identified as distinct and cohesive, despite intertwined origins and historical interactions. This is the case especially with Confucianism and Taoism. (348)[2]

The reader will notice, on going back to the first line of the previous citation, that Julia Ching contrasts East Asian religious life with that of "India and the West." The bracketing is instructive, and apparently argues against our point that the Indian religious reality is "different" from the Western. How then are these two positions to be reconciled?

To effect such a reconciliation one must first distinguish between the religions of Indian origin and the religions of non-Indian origin that are to be found in India. The religions of Indian origin found in India are Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, which are sometimes called the Indic religions (as distinguished from Indian religions) or collectively called the Indic religious tradition. The major religions of non-Indian origin found in India are Christianity and Islam. The concept of "separate communities" would then primarily apply to the separation between the Indic religious tradition and these religions and between these two religions themselves.

The point we have been making applies to these Indic religions. In this respect Wilfred Cantwell Smith describes the situation through his discussion of the word Hindu, as follows:

> So far as my retaining the term "Hindu" is concerned even when it cannot with precision be operationally defined, I use it as a proper (rather than generic) noun connoting, in accord with its original usage, all indigenous religious traditions of India (I would not care to exclude Jains or Indian Buddhists). I would be willing to venture a prediction that before long it will be widely recognized that such a question as "Is a Jain (*or*, a Sikh) a Hindu?" is not well put. By this I do not mean that the separation of these minority communities, at both the self-conscious and the sociological levels, may not be valid and may not remain and even grow. This is partly a political matter, and indeed the rise of conceptual separateness in modern times has been due not only to Western ideological influence but also very significantly to the development of modern (Western-derived, and in part, of course, British-imposed) political situations. It is rather that the term "Hindu" will not adequately serve to designate those non-Jain non-Sikh non-Christian non-Muslim non-Scheduled-Caste non-animist persons in India whom it would have to cover if this particular development proceeded. "Hindu" is a term without much serviceable function within India, at any level of precision (statistics, government, theology, etc.). Its chief usefulness, one might hazard, will be in the future what it originally was and has throughout primarily been, namely with a basically geographical orientation to refer in the worldwide conspectus of man's religiousness in a rough and ready way to those persons whose religious and social life is related to specifically Indian traditions. Where more

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[2] This final paragraph is also of interest:

> Is there anything called East Asian religion in the singular? The answer is, strangely, yes. And what is this religion? Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Vietnamese religions include variations on the well-known ancestor cult as well as a dimension of nature worship. There is as well some collaboration between Confucianism and Taoism in China, and between Buddhism and Shinto in Japan. Age-old traditions were incorporated into each system in a different way. To see these, we must go back to the remote past to examine the status of ancient religion before the other traditions developed. (Ching 348)

precision is required, other terms will be necessary. (258, note 55)

It is possible to confirm the point regarding the non-exclusive adherence to religions statistically in the case of Japan, rather than advance it just theoretically, as in the Indian case. For the year 1985, for instance, the figures for religious affiliation in Japan were as follows:

Buddhist	92,000,000 persons	76% of population
Shinto	115,000,000 persons	95% of population
Christian	1,000,000 persons	
New Religions	14,000,000 persons	
TOTAL	223,000,000 persons	

The total population of Japan in 1985 was 121,000,000. (Reader 6)

The indigenous religions also seem to be basically dharmic rather than religionist in their attitudes. This seems to be the implication of the following passage from Theodore M. Ludwig's *The Sacred Paths*:

> While these peoples exhibit a vast diversity of characteristics, some commonalties of religious expression can be noted. For example, such tribal, indigenous peoples often have a strong sense of the presence of the sacred in various forms, sometimes as spirits, ancestors, and gods, sometimes as a diffuse, impersonal power. Their myths and rituals are closely related to their life in hunting, farming, or herding, having to do with the fertility and vitality of the animals or plants that are necessary for existence. The tribe itself is the central social reality, and no distinction is made between "religion" and the traditional way of life in the tribe. (31)

Not seeking proselytes thus brings together the religions of Indian origin, the religions of the Far East and the indigenous peoples under the "dharmic" umbrella, especially in the sense that membership does not entail severing links with past allegiances for either party if they come together.

This is almost half the world. And in this half of the world the word "religious freedom" has a very different meaning because the word "religion" has a very different meaning. The Indic civilisation became a theatre of confrontation with the Western notion of religion in a way that never happened in East Asia; and even the Indian experience was very different from what occurred in the case of the indigenous religions which were almost pushed into oblivion by the West – a fate that they only barely escaped. It is perhaps on account of this historical circumstance that the articulation of the alternative concept of religious freedom through the identification of an alternative concept of religion among the various constituents of the dharmic constituency is being made the way it is being made now: in the context of the Indic civilisation.

Perhaps a consideration of how the same word "universal" leads to two different understandings of it, in a religionist and dharmic perspective respectively, will help clarify the point further. It would be helpful to start with the category of "universal religion" which is explained in a text of world religions as follows:

> Some religions understand themselves as addressed to all men; their aim is to embrace all of mankind and they actively desire converts. These are sometimes called universal religions. This is not meant to imply that they actually do embrace the whole human race, which would obviously not be true, but that that is their ideal. Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam are

universal religions in this sense.
(Burke 6)

Let us for the moment focus on Christianity and Islam as universal religions, saving Buddhism for consideration later. Now what does it mean precisely to say that they are "universal" religions? What it means is that if you are not a Christian you can become one; or if you are not a Muslim you can become one. But why should you wish to become a Christian or a Muslim? Because by doing so you will be saved, you will enter a state of grace, a state which you are not in, if you do not belong to them. From this point of view, one can say that Christianity and Islam are universal religions because they offer salvation to all. They promise universal salvation.

But so do many other religions – and on less stringent conditions: without your having to join them. This is where Buddhism becomes significant for it also offers salvation to all – but to achieve such salvation one does not necessarily have to be a Buddhist formally. Granted it might be preferable in some ways to be a Buddhist formally, but while it is helpful, it is not necessary. In the classical orthodox formulations of Christianity and Islam, exclusive membership of these religions is both a necessary and a sufficient condition for the sake of "salvation," while in the case of Buddhism it is a sufficient, but not a necessary condition. Further down the road lies the neo-Hindu position – that universal salvation is accessible to a person wherever he or she might be – without the need to convert to Hinduism in any way.

A subtle fact needs to be noted here – that Christianity and Islam *first* deny one salvation because one does not profess them and *then* offer it to all who would join them. This is one kind of universalism. But according to the Hindu position salvation is yours as you are – and without having to become a Hindu. Thus it too offers universal salvation – but without making itself the intermediary of it. So the question really is: which of these two universalisms is more universal – the conditional one ("join us"), or the unconditional one?

Before an answer is given contrast this with two conceptions of rights – human rights and citizen's rights. Which of the two are more universal? You have citizen's rights if you are a citizen of a state, but even a stateless human being possesses human rights – merely by virtue of being a human being. This is the whole point in calling them universal. It is worth noting that up to a point in the deliberations at the UNO, the document that ultimately became the "Universal Declaration of Human Rights," was referred to as the "International Declaration of Human Rights." The significance of ultimately designating them as universal rather than international should not be overlooked (Glendon 121). The situation is analogous to the Indic position on religious salvation – that a human being has access to it not by virtue of belonging to this or that religion – but by the mere fact of being a human being. This, I submit to you, is also the "dharmic" position – the position of much of Asia and of the indigenous world. It is also the more universal of the two.

V

Conclusion

It is therefore ironical that the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* does not accord explicit recognition to this position. In advocating the dharmic position the Indic tradition is perhaps

poised to make a crucial contribution to both contemporary religious discourse and contemporary human rights discourse.

DISCUSSION

- **What difficulty do you have with the concept of freedom of religion as the freedom to *change* one's religion?**

  On the surface it does not seem to present any difficulty because change "to" and change "from" one religion and another seems to be on par – that is – impartial. This would indeed hold if both religions shared the same concept of religion.

  If, however, the concept of religion itself differs in the two religions then the change is *not* symmetrical. When a Hindu becomes a Christian, the Hindu not only exchanges Christianity for Hinduism, the Hindu also exchanges an exclusivist concept of religion for a non-exclusivist one: the Hindu has also moved to a comparatively "narrow" concept of religion from a comparatively "broader" one. The reverse applies when the Christian becomes a Hindu, hence the move is not symmetrical in this sense, although containing an element of mirror-imaging within it.

- **You described Christianity as separative, but isn't Hinduism, with its caste distinctions, even more separative?**

  We are talking about two kinds of distinctions here – internal, that is, within one religion, and external, that is, between one religion and another. The comparative remark was made in relation to external distinctions. It is true that internal distinctions within Hinduism may be more pronounced on account of its pluralistic character.

- **Where does the caste system fit into the discussion?**

  The Indian experience with the West has led to an accentuation of existing differences within it in terms of both religion and society. "Hinduism," as it emerged during this period, was distinguished from Jainism, Buddhism and Sikhism in a way not apparent earlier. Similarly, although *varna* and *jati* are standard Hindu/Indic concepts, their formulation into a "caste system" perhaps occurred during British rule, as Nicholas B. Dirks has argued. Note that *varna* is a primarily Hindu category while *jati* applies to all the four Indic religions.

- **You seem to use the word "separative" in several senses. Could you clarify these?**

  The word is used in four different senses according to context:
  (i) To indicate a separation between the secular and religious realms; (ii) to indicate separation between religion and culture; (iii) to indicate the

separation of one "religion" as a set of beliefs and practices from another and (iv) to indicate the separation of one religious community from another. The word "integrative" or "integral" could also be used to apply at all the four levels.

- **In her quotation, Julia Ching contrasts the position of the religions of the Far East with "that of India and the West," but you align the position of India with that of the Far East. How is this divergence to be accounted for?**

One must begin by distinguishing between the words "Indian" and "Indic." The case of India *includes* the interaction of the Indic religions – Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism – with Islam and Christianity, which are also present in India and are therefore Indian but *not Indic* religions. The discussion in the paper pertains to Indic religions.

- **Julia Ching says that Japanese do not consider themselves "religious." How is that to be explained?**

This is a good illustration of how the word religion implies a concept of religion. In its Western sense the use of the word religion often involves a sense of (i) separation between sacred and profane; (ii) separation between religion and culture; (iii) separation between one religion and another. In the Far East these don't apply. So they may well be described as non-religious in *these senses*.

- **Julia Ching describes all the religions of the Far East as indeed sharing one "religion" – that of ancestor worship. Is this also true of Indic religions?**

No. Buddhism to a limited extent and Jainism and Sikhism in an even more pronounced manner do not subscribe to *Shraddha*. All four, however, converge on the sanctity of the Om symbol, with the possible exception of Theravada Buddhism.

- **Does the Dharmic position exclude the religionist?**

Only its exclusiveness.

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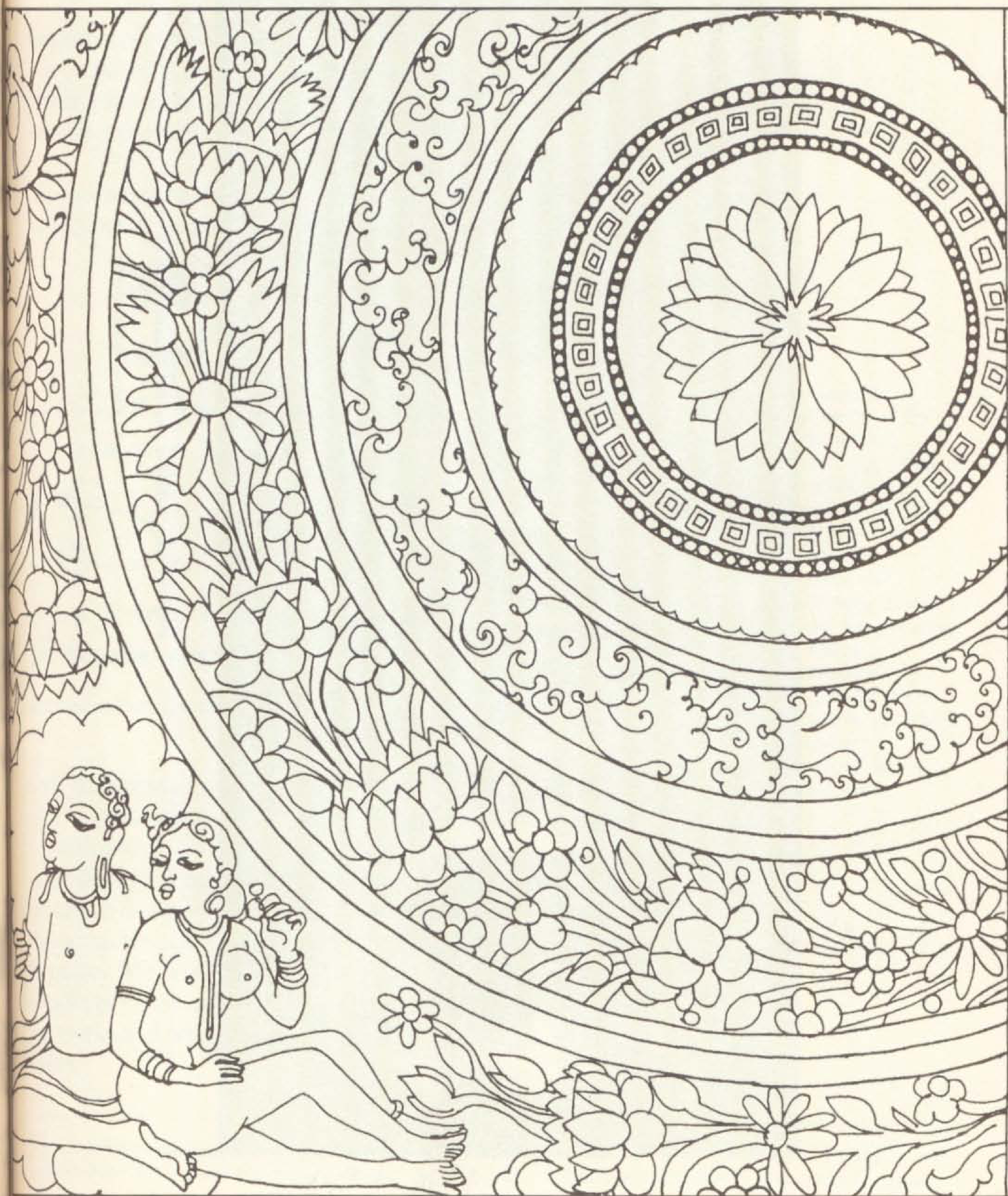
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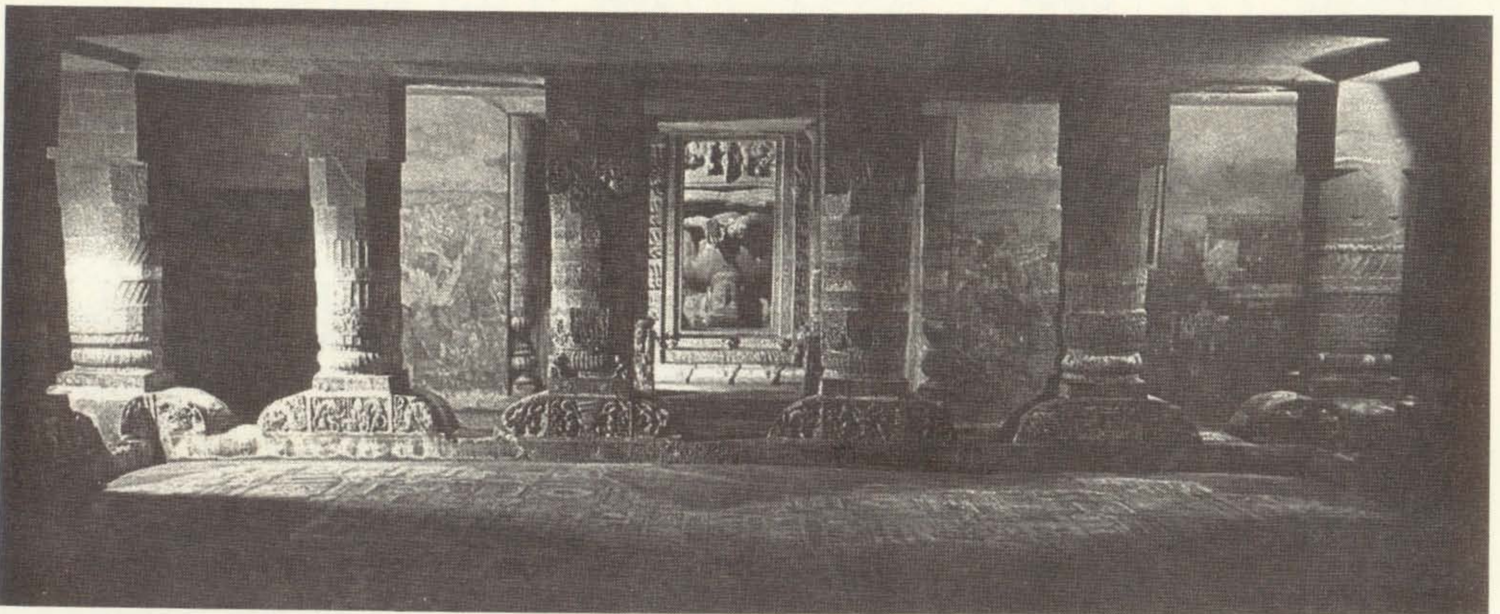
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Exploring Ajanta





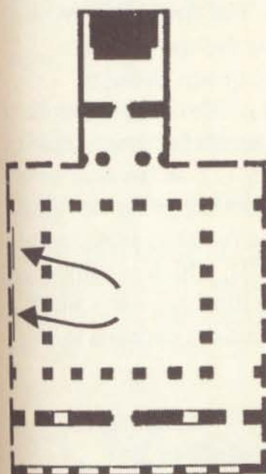
Ajanta, Cave 1, inside view

The Mahajanaka Jataka Murals: An Introduction

S. Swaminathan

SCENES FROM THE MAHAJANAKA Jataka are painted in Cave One of Ajanta, on the left wall of the main hall starting from the top of the door of the second cell and covering the rest of the wall.

According to the Jataka, the Bodhisattva born as Mahajanaka was the son of Arithajanaka who was banished from his kingdom Mithila by his brother Polajanaka. Mahajanaka went all over the world as a merchant and amassed enough wealth to help him regain his father's kingdom. In the meantime his uncle Polajanaka died survived by his beautiful and haughty daughter, Shivali. Before his death he expressed the wish that Shivali should marry only that person who could fulfil three conditions. Thus he set about three almost impossible conditions.



Mahajanaka fulfilled all three conditions and married Shivali without being aware that he was marrying his cousin. However, the pomp and luxuries of palace life were not to his liking. In spite of the pleadings of his queen, Mahajanaka finally renounced the world and went to the Himalayas to meditate upon Truth.

S. Swaminathan taught Mechanical Engineering at IIT-Delhi, for thirty-three years. Acting on his belief that Indian youths have an inadequate understanding of their heritage, and consequently lack a sense of identity, he decided to acquaint his students with various aspects of Indian culture. One of his lectures, "A Layman's Introduction to Ajanta Paintings" *was compiled and published as a CD-ROM. Three years ago he opted for voluntary retirement and set up Sudharsanam, a centre for arts and culture in Pudukkottai, Tamilnadu.*

The line drawings used in this feature have been reproduced from *Narrative Wall Paintings* by Deiter Schlingloff and *Devotional and Ornamental Paintings* by Monica Zin. Both volumes have been published by Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers Pvt. Ltd, New Delhi. See photographs on pages 102-04.

In Ajanta, the series shows the story after the marriage of Mahajanaka. Fortunately, the scenes are painted mostly in a chronological order, except the one of the shipwreck which is painted at the very end.

Importance of the Panel

The narration of this Jataka is of great importance from the point of view of art history. Due to the fortunate survival of a major portion, the depiction of this Jataka offers scope for a detailed study of both the art style and method of narration of this period.

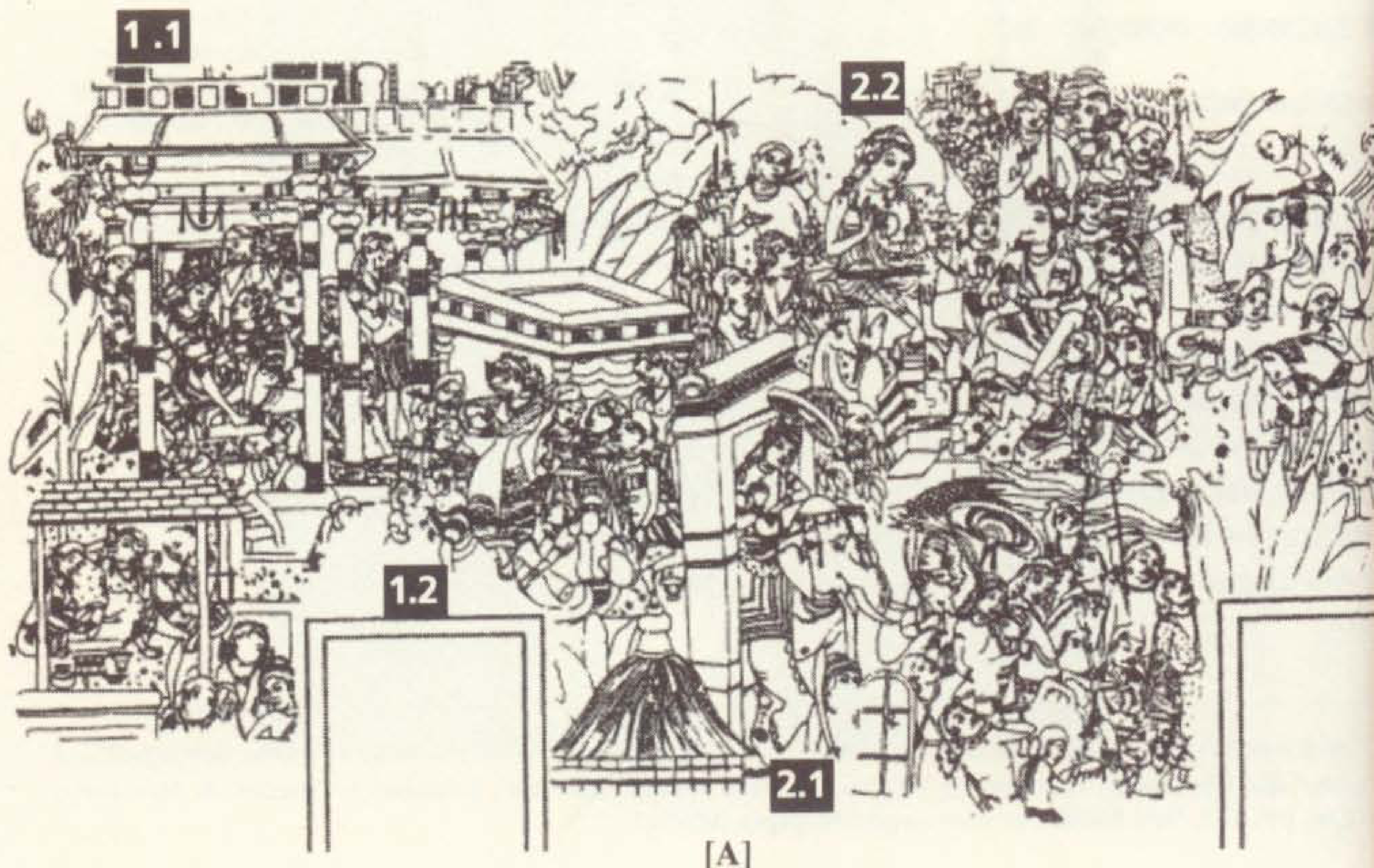
In terms of the art style, the depiction belongs to the "baroque" period. These paintings show the beginning of deterioration from classical elegance to baroque ostentation.

A detailed study of these paintings would be rewarding as it could provide a wealth of information about jewellery, textile and dress, musical instruments, architecture, and so on.

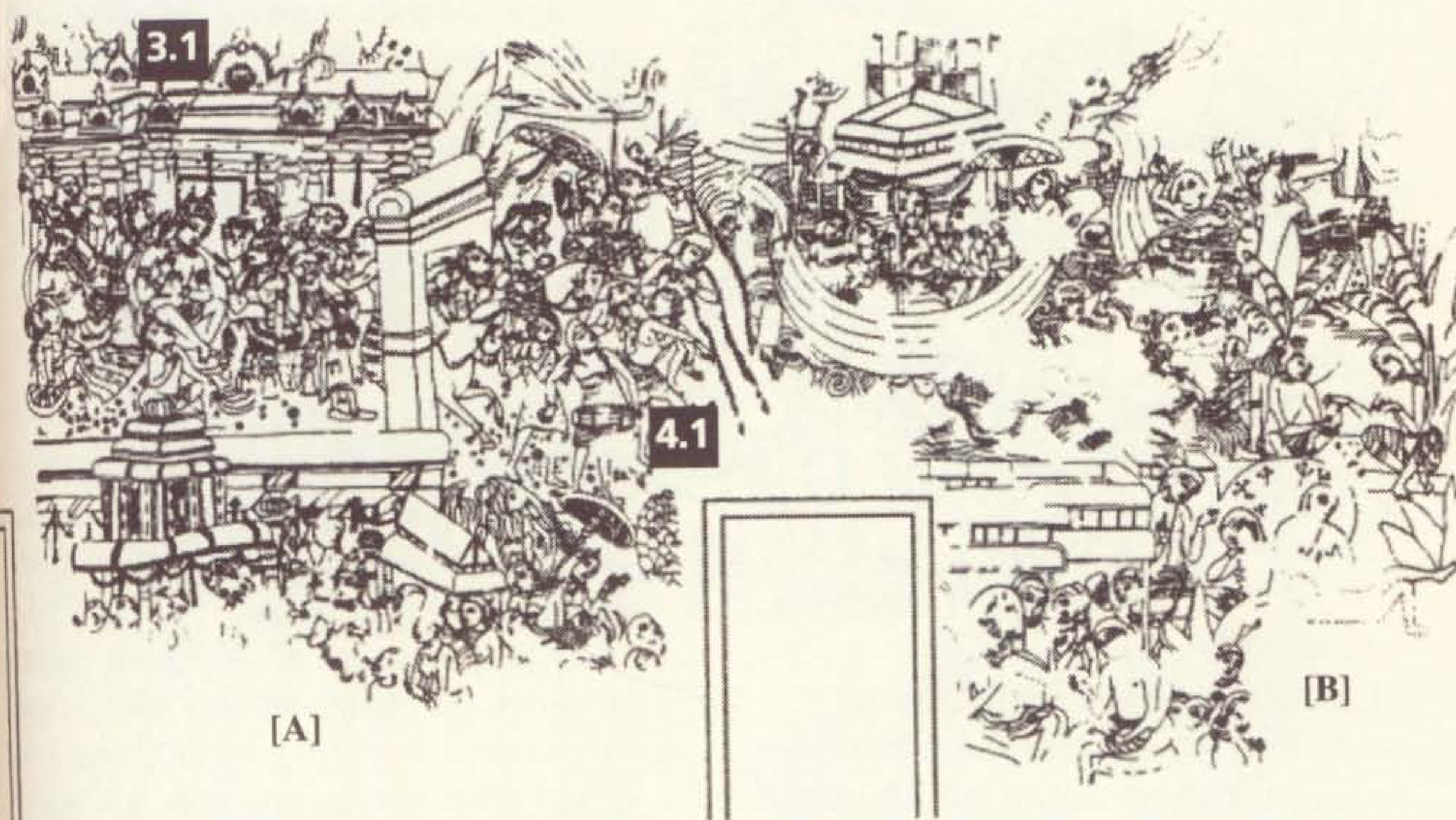
The Ajanta artist has followed certain conventions in composition. Scenes are not separated from each other by frames. Instead, tactfully placed rocks, gateways and pillars serve as vague dividers that do not irritate the eye. Further, the narration may not be painted chronologically. The Ajanta artist has painted portraits of the same character in different scenes which resemble each other very closely.

The Composition

We may say that the story is narrated in four acts (A). The first act starts on the left where we see the king in dilemma and the queen trying to captivate him (1). The dance scene on the right is an attempt by the queen to captivate the king (2). In the next act we find the disturbed king going through the palace gate to the forest to seek counsel from an ascetic (3), which is painted to its right (4). The third act starts where the king announces the decision to the



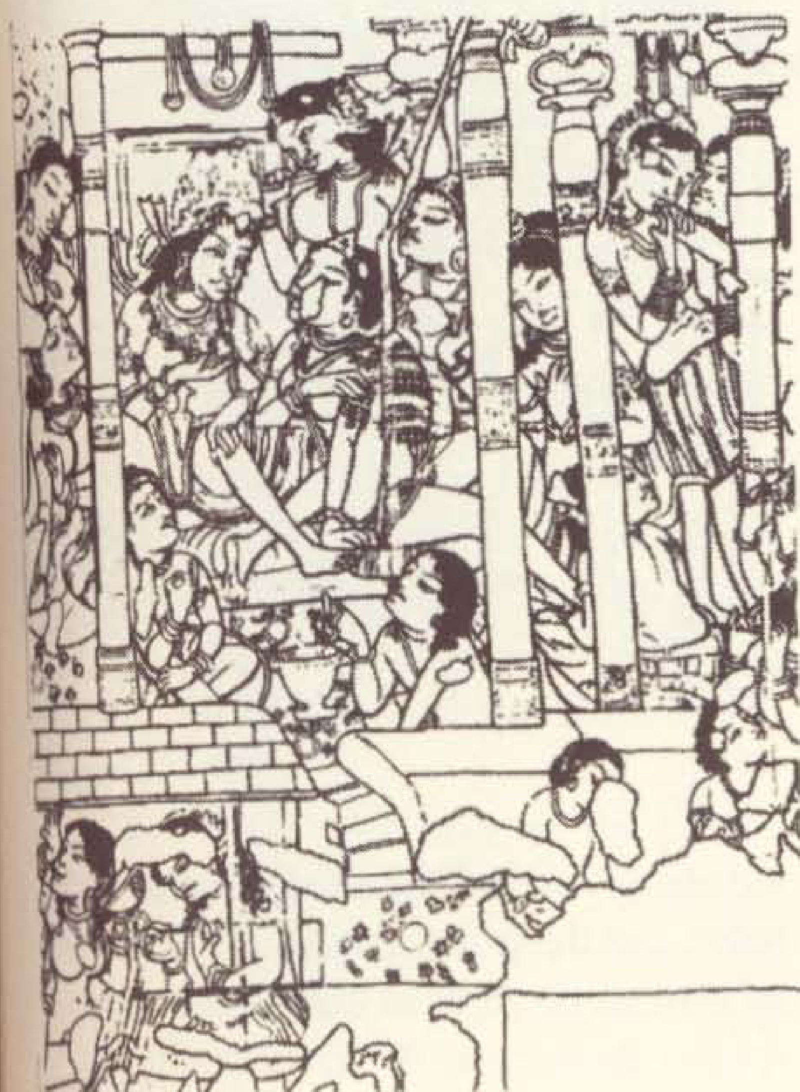
[A]



shocked royal household (5) and the final act is of his leaving the palace (6).

Act I Scene 1: Mahajanaka in Dilemma

In the first scene of Act One, shown on the extreme left, we see Mahajanaka in dilemma. In this the king is seen sitting on a bed, leaning on a striped bolster. He is wearing a crown adorned with gems. On his left is Shivali, his queen, leaning against him. The king does not look at his wife. He has a wild and vacant look. His right hand suggests despair.



The queen is scantily clothed, perhaps to captivate the king with her charm! A number of maids are seen in the scene. Some of them are looking anxiously act the royal couple and the others act the dance that is taking place outside. In front of the king is an urn. A dwarf, who is to be found in most of the royal scenes in Ajanta, is in attendance sitting on the ground to the right of the king.

Beyond the pavilion is the second scene of this act where a dancing girl attempts to divert the attention of the king. This scene is separated from the previous one by a few pillars.

Scene 2: Dancer with Musicians

Beyond the pillars, which perhaps separate the scenes, we see the next scene in which a dancing girl with musicians is entertaining the dejected king to draw him to the pleasures of the world and to



divert his attention from spiritual pursuits. Dancing must have been a sophisticated art during this Mahayana period, as can be seen in this scene.

A professional dancer strikes a graceful pose of *tribhanga* while her hands eloquently express the *mudra*s (hand-gestures). She is wearing a two-piece upper garment of matching colours and a skirt of contemporary design. Her ornaments are sophisticated and extensive – thumb ring set with a miniature mirror, earrings of elaborate design, and head-dress of strings of pearls and flowers.

She is surrounded by a group of five musicians. Two are playing flutes, two are playing cymbals, one a pair of standing drums, another a bell-shaped drum, resembling the *damaru* of Lord Nataraja, and the fifth, with her back to us, a stringed instrument. Like the dancer, all the accompanying musicians show great dynamism and movement.

The palatial surroundings and decorations, the accompaniment of a host of musical instruments, the fantastic garments and elaborate ornaments have all successfully contributed to staging a spectacular scene.

Undeterred by all these, in the next act, Mahajanaka leaves the palace through the palace gate. The gate perhaps divides this act from the last one.

Act II: Mahajanaka Seeks Advice from an Ascetic

The queen is not successful in her attempt to hold back the king and Mahajanaka's mental turmoil has not ceased. In order to seek advice from a saint, Mahajanaka, with his entourage, goes out through the palace gate on an elephant.

In the next scene Mahajanaka meets an ascetic in the Himavali Hill. The ascetic with matted hair and a rosary in his hand is delivering his sermon from a stone platform. Among the large number of



listeners we find the king with his hands folded in deep reverence. We find a pair of deer at the feet of the ascetic with faces tilted up, as if in rapt attention.

Act III: Mahajanaka Announces his Decision



The third act, where the enlightened Mahajanaka announces his decision to abdicate, is full of pathos and feeling.

On the left is the king announcing his decision to renounce the world in spite of the pleadings of Queen Shivali. There are a few attendants around the royal couple, two waving the whisk. The girl behind the queen is stunned, her eyebrows drawn, and the girl above the queen is musing with a finger on her cheek. The dwarf is still holding on to the same vantage position.

Act IV: Mahajanaka Leaves the Palace

Now we come to the last scene of the drama where Mahajanaka leaves the palace on horseback through the palace gate. As per the Ajanta convention the gate separates the new act from the previous one.

The king is seen leaving the palace in full regal splendour. The royal umbrella is held aloft. He is led by a procession of his loyal subjects – a large number of palace musicians, a flute player, a cymbal player, a conch blower and a *mridangist* are in attendance.

The panel that follows is an earlier scene, of part of the story chronologically anterior to the part just described, of the shipwreck and its sequel. This is greatly damaged (B).



A Study of the Panel: Portrayal of Characters

It is interesting to study how the Ajanta artist has portrayed characters. He has maintained continuity in dress and physical features of the characters, but brings out the contrast in their expressions.

The King

The king is depicted three times: when the queen tries to captivate him; when he meets an ascetic, and when he announces his decision. Though his posture in all the three scenes is the

same, the emotional atmosphere is not.

In the first scene of Act One, the newly-wed king is in regal splendour – two rows of necklaces sparkling with diamonds and pearls – one, short and fitting the neck and the other, elaborate and slightly longer. These are in addition to the pearl-studded sacred-thread. He has a vacant look reflecting his mental conflict and his hands showing his inner pain.

When he meets the ascetic, the elaborate necklace is replaced with a less ostentatious one. (But why is the sacred thread around the left elbow? This in Hindu practice is worn only while doing ceremonial ablution to the dead fore-fathers. Was the Ajanta artist careless?)

Coming to his expression, sitting before the sage, now, his whole deportment is one of humility and utter surrender, his hands folded in prayer.

Finally, when he announces his decision to renounce, he casts off everything including the sacred thread, except the close fitting beads. Is the removal of the sacred thread suggestive of the impending *sannyasa*?

His visage is now serene and full of compassion and love, but firm and determined. His hands show the *dharma chakra mudra* (preaching-attitude) to show that he has now found the path.

The Queen

The change in Shivali's attitude is even more pronounced in the two scenes where she is depicted – when pleading with the king and when being informed of the king's renunciation.

While pleading with the king in the first scene she is shown as a conceited queen. She is almost nude and coquettish, determined to win over her husband by using all her charms.

When the king announces his decision to leave, she is well-draped, sitting "erect like a candle undisturbed by air" ready to receive the heart-breaking news.

Musicians and Musical Instruments

Musicians playing musical instruments have been shown in many scenes in Ajanta. A variety of musical instruments have been depicted, both in the paintings and the sculptures. These cover the period from the second century BC to about the sixth century AD. So Ajanta offers scope for a study of the development of the musical heritage of India. We can see both the continuity and the change over the period as presented in Ajanta itself.

In this narration musicians are shown in two scenes. The accompanying musicians of the dancer in the earlier scene were cymbal players, flautists, drummers and a musician playing a string instrument. The bell-shaped drum with a narrow ring for a grip looks more like some of the drums used in folk music. The standing drums are not found anymore in India. We are not able to make a judgement on the string instrument as this part of the painting is somewhat mutilated.

A slightly different group of musicians accompany the king when he abdicates. The musician blowing a conch-shell is shown with puffed cheeks and popping eyes. The conch is still used to herald the arrival of important people like the king or during the ceremonial procession of deities and *puja*s in temples and houses. The *mridangam* (or *pakhawaj*) player is shown very realistically. His instrument and playing techniques are the same as those used today, betraying an unbroken musical tradition of not less than fifteen centuries.

We can witness another set of musicians in the composition "Descent of Indra" in Cave 17. In the Bodhisattva

Padmapaani panel (line 3) in the same cave we come across the *kinnara*s playing musical instruments; one of the instruments resembles a modern mandolin.

Dancers and Dancing

Dancers have also been portrayed in other scenes in Ajanta. For example, "Dancer in the Naga Court" in this cave is one. Fortunately, we have a composition depicting dancers accompanied by musicians belonging to the earlier period, namely of the second-first centuries BC in the dancers and musicians painted in Cave 10, though badly damaged.

One can feel unaffected gay abandon in the Hinayana masterpiece, as against the Mahayana painting which is more stylised. Simple clothing and a few ornaments, such as the conch-shell bangles modelled on traditional folk ornaments of pre-Christian era painting, are in contrast to the beautifully designed garments, a variety of glittering trinkets, and bewildering coiffure of the dancer in the Mahajanaka court. The costumes, the hair-styles, the shape of the eyes and the general atmosphere all epitomise the final phase in the development of the Ajanta style of painting.

Dancing and painting have a close relationship in Indian art. Knowledge of dancing was prescribed for painters. Gestures of every character, particularly the women, show the influence of dance.

Producing Relief Through Colouring

One of the methods of creating an illusion of the third dimension is through the skilful use of colours. The Ajanta artist has used various techniques for this. Among them two are important. One is through a number of shading techniques called *vartana* and the other is a method of adding highlights, called *ujjotana*.

In the execution of the figure of Mahajanaka and other characters, the artist has made use of the *ujjotana* technique. This is done by adding white patches on the chin, breasts, arms, legs or wherever an elevation of form was desired.

Added to this was the use of blue colour, especially on the background to create an illusion of depth by contrasting with the warm red and brown colours. The visual depth is enhanced by this judicious use of blue – of lapis lazuli – by contrasting it with the warmth of the red and brown tones. The illusion of spaciousness is also evident where the reddish ochre, yellow ochre and dark brown tints applied to the dancing girl and her imposing costume stand out against a plain bluish-green background.

Draughtsmanship

A noteworthy feature of Ajanta is the expert draughtsmanship. The perfection of painting technique is displayed in the extraordinary breadth and confidence of draughtsmanship – the varying thicknesses

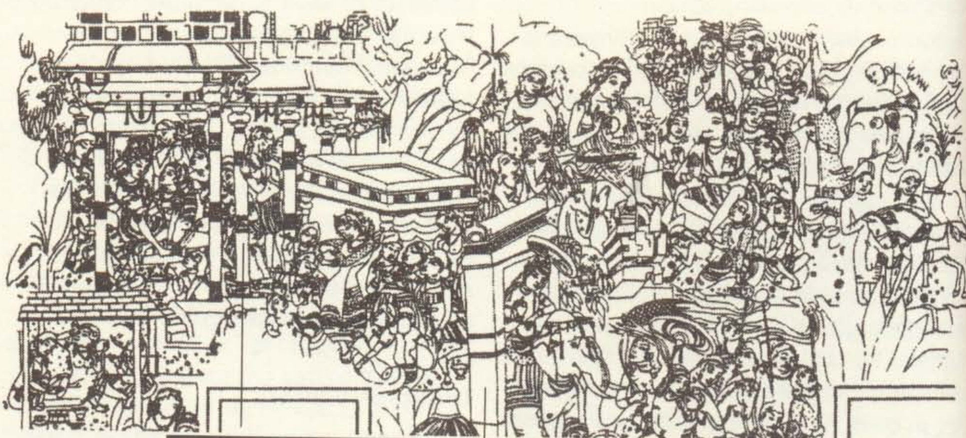


of line drawn with a free flowing sweep of the brush to depict the oval faces, arched eyebrows, aquiline noses, and fine sensitive lips. The lines have become darker to serve as a suitable accessory to the *vartana* and *ujjotana* techniques for creating an illusion of depth.

Demarcation of Scenes and Acts

Some consider that the Ajanta artist has used certain conventions in separating acts and scenes. This composition offers scope for such a conclusion.

A gate is often placed to herald the beginning of an act. We have two examples for this – one at the end of the second scene, the king on an elephant starts a new act. The other is when the king passes through the gate, finally leaving the palace on horseback. The pillars of the pavilion separate the first scene from the following one of dance performance.





Contemporary Fashion

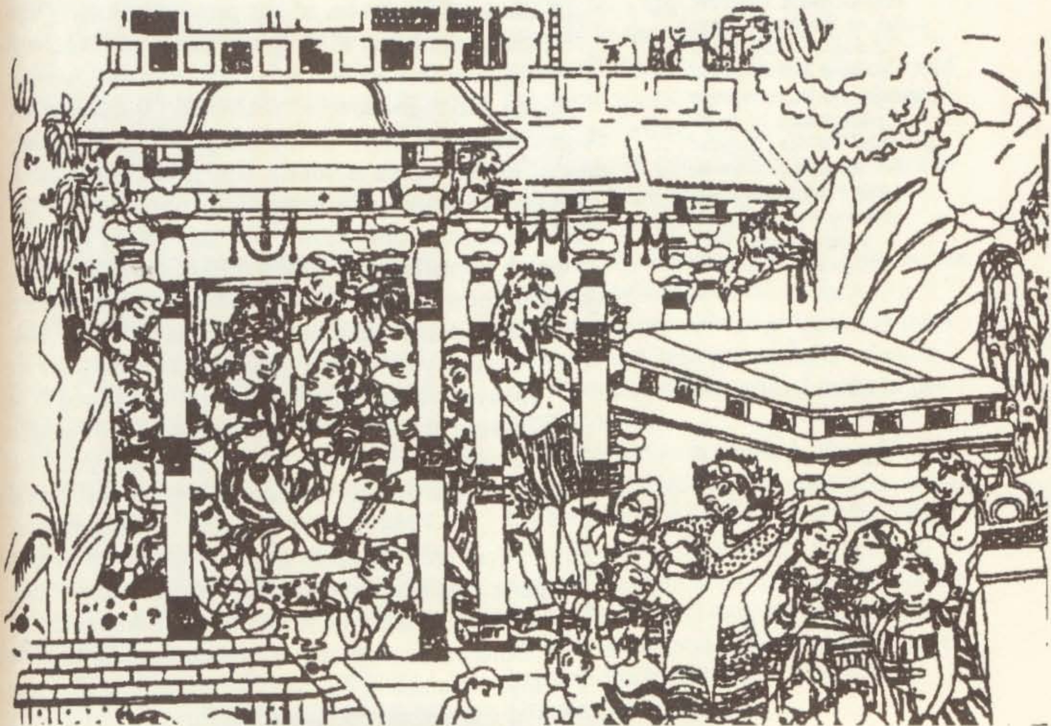
Ajanta is a treasure house to study the contemporary fashion in textiles, jewellery, etc. As an example, the *chamara*-bearing girl in the last scene of the king leaving the palace after his abdication sports an upper-garment with rows of geese printed on it – a fashion referred to in contemporary literature.

The tailored dress of the dancer as well of the other character is a proof of high degree of sophistication in both fabric design and dressmaking. That there are no "monotonous" repetitions in the dress is also to be noted.

The glorious tradition of Ikat, where the yarn is dyed to suit design, leading to today's Chungudi, Patola and Pochampalli, was initiated here.

Baroque Ostentation

By the middle of the sixth century, the classical phase of simplicity and balance gave way to a style of over-ornamentation and exaggeration called the baroque. We have a maze of pillars in royal pavilions, palace windows, porches, balconies, etc. The scenes are crowded. The eye-slits are stretched out of proportion to the face; men look effeminate and women exaggeratedly feminine, with bulging curves and rounded breasts. Both men and women wear excessive ornaments. The narration of Mahajanaka Jataka belongs to this period.



Maze of pillars in royal pavilions, palace windows, porches, balconies, etc., and a crowded scene

Mural Paintings of India

Benoy K. Behl

Benoy K. Behl is an art-historian, filmmaker and photographer. He is the author of The Ajanta Caves *(London: Thames and Hudson) and is known worldwide for his pioneering photography of mural paintings. He has produced 26 films for Doordarshan on* The Paintings of India, *covering the tradition of Indian painting from prehistoric times to the present.*

INDIA HAS ONE OF the greatest traditions of painting in the ancient world. Since very early times, a very high degree of technical excellence was achieved and the art, born out of the deep philosophy of the land, was graceful and sublime.

The earliest surviving paintings in the Indian subcontinent are those of Ajanta. The paintings here were made in two phases. The oldest paintings date to around the second century BC. The marvellous later phase of the Ajanta paintings was around the fifth century AD, under the patronage of the Vakatakas who ruled the Deccan.

The subjects are scenes from the life of the Buddha and the Jatakas: stories of His previous births. These paintings bring to us great beauty of form, with extremely fine rendering which imparts a sense of volume and roundedness. Yet, amidst the tender and elegant beauty of the world, these paintings constantly take us to that which is within. The great Bodhisattvas (Seekers of Truth) who are painted upon the walls of Ajanta, always look within. It is this life of the spirit which pervades the entire world of these paintings. Ajanta is known to be the fountainhead and inspiration of Buddhist paintings across the whole of Asia.

Contrary to what is generally known, there are many remnants of ancient paintings found in all corners of the Indian subcontinent, belonging to practically every century of the last 1500 years and more. These display the fact of a great and unified tradition of painting in ancient India.

There are fragments of paintings of the time of Ajanta which survive in many Buddhist cave sites, including Pitalkhora near Ellora, in Maharashtra.

Nine caves were excavated on the slopes of the Vindhya hills above the Bagh River during the reign of the Guptas, between the fourth and the sixth centuries AD. Unfortunately, the paintings on the walls of these caves have been practically lost to the

ravages of time. Reproductions of earlier times show that, as at Ajanta, the Buddhist paintings of Bagh present a sense of stillness. There is all the activity of life and yet a profound sense of peace upon the faces of the painted figures.

As at Bagh, what remains in the sixth century Hindu caves of Badami evokes the magic of a world of painted splendour, when all the walls and ceilings were covered with murals.

In the meantime, in the seventh century, the Pallava kings of Tamil Nadu gave exuberant and glorious expression to themes of Lord Shiva in paintings in the temples of Panamalai and Kailashnath in Kanchipuram.

The walls of the niches in the outer ambulatory path of the Kailashnath temple were once covered with paintings in brilliant colours. Traces of these are still discernible.

In these paintings, we see the beginnings of a sense of imperial grandeur represented through art, in the emphasis on the depiction of lavish crowns and jewellery.

In the ninth century Jain cave of Sittannavasal in Tamil Nadu is a marvellous lotus pond painted on the ceiling. It is a scene of the faithful gathering lotuses to place upon the resting place of a Tirthankara, a Jain saint. Elephants, buffaloes, geese and fish frolic in the waters which are overflowing with beautiful lotuses. The painter has used the occasion to present a joyous world. He brings to us a sense of sublime happiness; as fish swim in the waters, an elephant appears to smile, and gentlemen gather lotuses larger than themselves.

In the meantime, the magnificent Kailashnath temple had been hewn out of a mountain at Ellora in the eighth century. The walls and ceilings of this temple were once covered with murals. Fragments of these which remain show the beauty and quality of the art.

There are also paintings of the late ninth century in the Jain caves at Ellora. The painters here continue the older tradition but with contributions of their own. Besides the naturalism and grace inherited from Ajanta, the figures painted here are stylised and elongated. These are significant changes which, in later years, are reflected in paintings over the whole of India.

In the heart of the Brhadisvara temple at Thanjavur in Tamil Nadu, protected by massive walls of stone, are the finest paintings of the theme of Lord Shiva ever painted. Towards the end of the tenth century, King Rajaraja Chola expressed his devotion and also his power and grandeur, by commissioning murals on a spectacular scale. The colours in the paintings are soft and subdued, the lines firm and sinuous and the expressions are true to life. More than ever before, we see the artists' lavish use of embellishments on crowns and jewellery, portraying the royal splendour of the times.

At over ten thousand feet altitude, the barren desert plateau of Ladakh is a fascinating crucible of cultures. In days gone by, this was not an isolated place but an active crossroads of trade in the ancient world.

In the eleventh century, King Yeshe Od of Guge built 108 monasteries across his kingdom in Ladakh, Western Tibet, Kinnaur and Lahaul-Spiti. Craftsmen and artists from Kashmir were invited by Yeshe Od and they constructed and painted these monasteries which were to become the backbone of Trans-Himalayan Buddhism.

The monastery of Alchi is an oasis of beauty and colour in the midst of the

vast and barren landscape of Ladakh. The *dhoti* of an Avalokitesvara statue in the three-storied temple of Alchi has some of the most gorgeous paintings. These are the only surviving visual representations of the culture and architecture of ancient Kashmir.

One of the masterpieces of the Alchi paintings is the Green Tara. We see here the marvellous shaping of the form with skilful shading. There is also the depiction of the protruding further eye which extends beyond the line of the face. This is a convention in Indian painting, which was first seen in the murals of Ellora.

The Kashmiri artists present a lively world, with the grace and beauty of form coming to them from the classical Indian tradition. The rich textiles and decorative elements of these paintings are remarkable and they show that the artists had assimilated the traditions coming to them from Gandhara and Central Asia. The Kashmiri style was mainly responsible for the lovely wall paintings still seen in the beautiful monasteries at Alchi, Mangyu and Sumda in Ladakh, in Tabo monastery in the Spiti valley and in Nako monastery in Kinnaur district, Himachal Pradesh.

The traditions of Vajrayana Buddhist paintings which were laid at the time of the grand conception of King Yeshe Od's 108 monasteries, continued in the centuries to come. From Ladakh in the west to Arunachal Pradesh in the east, across the highest mountains of the world, is the one region which has an unbroken tradition of Indian mural painting.

Deep in the heart of the plains, in the Lalitpur District of Uttar Pradesh, stand the Shiva and Vishnu temples which are known as the Kacheris. The Choti Kacheri has on its ceiling the remains of exquisite paintings of the thirteenth century. These are extremely valuable as, after the fragmentary remains at Nalanda and Satdhara, these are the oldest surviving paintings of the Northern Plains in India.

After the eleventh century, the art of painting came to prominence again during the rule of the Vijaynagar kings from the fourteenth century onwards. In the cosmopolitan atmosphere of Hampi and other sites, we see fine examples of mural paintings. The ceiling of the Virupaksha Temple at Hampi is covered with paintings of the fifteenth century. There is simplicity and vigour in the style of the paintings. A sense of movement and energy is caught in the painted figures.

The temple at Lepakshi was made in the sixteenth century by the Nayaka brothers, Virupanna and Viranna, at a centre of trade and pilgrimage in the Vijaynagar Empire. The paintings on the ceiling of the *mandapa* here are some of the finest mural paintings of the medieval period in India. Lepakshi presents the richness and colour of a great cosmopolitan society. It presents one of the great moments in Indian painting. There is a sense of liveliness here which is enhanced by the depiction of the protruding eye. The liveliness is also conveyed by angular features and by the peaked corners of clothes.

Legends associated with Shiva and Parvati, Krishna and Rama were painted on the walls of palaces and temples in Kerala from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century. There is a new sense of power and majesty which we see in the painted Gods of Kerala. The manner of shading to depict volume reminds us of Ajanta and Alchi. Each figure here is larger than life. Their limbs are strong and their bodies are full and firm. The

gods painted here are proud, vigourous and protective. The idiom of Kerala is unique. Its close relationship to the ancient dance dramas of the land are seen in the elaborate headgear and heavy forms.

In the sixteenth century, under the Mughal Emperor Akbar, the art of painting was revived in Northern India after many centuries. The finest miniatures were made in the court of Akbar and the emperors who succeeded him. At Fatehpur Sikri, the capital city built by Akbar, we have the remnants of mural paintings. These are fine paintings and very similar to the miniatures of that period. There are representations of busy market places, elephants, horse riders and a depiction of a flautist.

The Bundelas, who were powerful in central India, founded the city of Orccha in 1531. Mural paintings were made on the walls of all the palaces within the magnificent Orccha Fort. The Raj Mahal was completely adorned with mural paintings of the seventeenth century. What remains of these exhibits a blend of the two most significant styles of painting in India at that time – the Mughal and the Rajput. The expressions are often gentle. Exposure to the Mughal court has also led to a sense of courtly sophistication.

There are surviving mural paintings from the seventeenth century onwards in Rajasthan. They present a varied tapestry, with the constant interaction of the indigenous idiom of mural painting and the influences coming from the imperial Mughal court. The finest wall paintings of Rajasthan are found in the Bhojanshala of the Amer Palace near Jaipur. These are exquisite drawings of the seventeenth century on Vaishnava themes. In depicting these divine images, the artist appears to transcend himself. These drawings are made in panels upon the wall and are small for murals. However, the sensitivity and honest depiction of the painter creates an intimacy between the viewer and the painting.

Rajasthan was on the major trade routes of days gone by. The area of Shekhawati has a concentration of nineteenth and twentieth century *havelis* which are profusely painted. The paintings here reflect the opulence of the flourishing trading community of the Marwaris.

The cultural impact of the sudden exposure to European influences is reflected in the varied and indiscriminate depiction of a wide array of subjects. These range from the eternal religious themes to the new inventions which the traders would have seen in their visits to the major port cities.

The verdant Pahari hills saw the finest continuation of the tradition of murals in India. The eighteenth and nineteenth century paintings on the walls of the Rang Mahal in Chamba are among the best surviving examples of Pahari murals.

The themes are mostly religious and the styles are closely related to those of the miniature paintings of the region. We see fine expressions, the refinement of Pahari miniatures and an exuberant and joyous sense of life.

Orissa, in the eastern plains of India, is a land of the rich continuation of ancient culture. The eighteenth century paintings on the walls of the Viranchinarayan Temple at Buguda are some of the finest surviving murals of that period in India.

These are a rare instance of the continuation of the ancient Indian mural tradition. These are not like miniatures made upon the walls. The themes are

from the *Ramayana*. The sense of humanity and humility in these paintings reminds us of the finest of ancient Indian paintings.

The murals of Punjab perhaps represent the last phase of wall paintings in India. We see here shades of realism from the tradition of Mughal miniatures and yet faces that are distinctly of the Punjab. The themes and the manner are deeply rooted in the local culture. There is a quiet sense of dignity which emerges in the best of these paintings.

Mural paintings are found hidden away in temples in the midst of busy market places in Amritsar, in temples in villages such as Kishankot and in the Qila Mubarak and Qila Androon in the Patiala fort.

In ancient times, the philosophical ideas of Hinduism and Buddhism spread from India to practically every corner of Asia. As art was an integral part of life and religion, the concepts of Indian art spread far and wide, alongwith the philosophy.

In 1930, Laurence Binyon, Director of the British Museum, wrote, "Whoever studies the art of China and Japan, at whatever point he begins, starts on a long road which will lead him ultimately to Ajanta." Scholars in all the Asian countries trace the roots of their classic paintings to the murals of India.

The paintings of the fifth century of Sigiriya and of the twelfth century of Polonnaruva in Sri Lanka; mural paintings of the twelfth-thirteenth century pagodas of Bagan in Myanmar and the classic paintings of the Horyuji temple in Japan closely reflect the traditions of Indian paintings.

The art of Asia has been informed by a deep vision of the eternal harmony of the world. It is this vision of life which shaped the grace and the forms of the paintings of Ajanta. This art travelled with its philosophy of compassion all across Asia to create a vision that shaped the culture of a whole continent.

Benoy K. Behl in Conversation with Chandana Dutta

CD: We would be interested to know how you started out as a photographer, what started you, something about your career/growth as a photographer, given that your contribution to Ajanta is held in such high regard. What about your pre-Ajanta work? What would you consider your most important achievement?

BKB: I am essentially a filmmaker and writer and photography has been a hobby for me. At the Film and Television Institute of India I did a specialisation in Motion Picture Photography and studied the theory and technical details of photography. This led me early in my career as a filmmaker to experiment with taking photographs in conditions of low light.

Scenes at night, particularly in the light of the full moon, always fascinated me. In the stillness of the night, when the sounds and clamorous confusion of the day have faded away, one can hear whispers from the past and focus upon a deeper essential reality. It is as if the fingers of the moonlight do not disturb the dust of previous centuries which lie upon monuments, sites, landscapes and other scenes. Other technical experts and I began to notice that there was a greater richness and luminosity of colour in the low-light pictures as compared to pictures taken conventionally with flashlights.

The many churches of Old Goa and those in the many villages in the Goan countryside were among the early subjects of my low-light photography. Besides capturing colours beautifully, the technique also gave a great versatility to the work. Vast interiors of churches, their exteriors at night and many rich details of the culture and lifestyle of the region were photographed. The style was one of absorption in the subject, allowing oneself to be embraced by it and capturing the beauty and details through a sense of participation.

In the mid-1980s, it was brought to my attention that the glorious and most important paintings of Ajanta had never been accurately photographed, owing to the fact that the caves are dark and strong lights are not permitted to be used on the paintings. The problem was compounded by the fact that the surface of the paintings was very reflective and strong lights tended to create a great deal of surface reflection and distortion of colours. Here was a great technical challenge of documenting the finest paintings of our rich heritage of art which had not been clearly presented before the world.

I was also informed that the true and luminous quality of the colours and the depth and richness of details in the paintings was not visible even to the eye when one visited the caves. This was on account of the fact that the Archaeological Survey of India had installed very dim lighting in the caves, which excluded the light at the upper end of the colour spectrum. Thus the paintings appeared orangish and the blues and greens in particular were lost in the viewing.

CD: We believe that there is a tradition of photographing Ajanta? How would you describe this? How has this tradition – any specific individual in that tradition – influenced you? Also, how does your work differ/take off from this tradition?

BKB: Since the mid-nineteenth century, there have been in fact many attempts to make painted reproductions of the Ajanta murals. The British Government sponsored three such major attempts. A report in *The Times of India* of April 6, 1886, says, "In a national undertaking of this Nature, the Secretary of State should make it his special business to see that no pains and no money are spared for the initial outlay. The panels and decorative work alone will render the book (containing reproductions) indispensable to every important art school in Europe."

Major Robert Gill (from 1844 to 1863), John Griffiths (from 1872 to 1885) and James Burgess (from 1877 to 1882) made Herculean efforts to paint reproductions of the Ajanta Murals. Unfortunately, when the work of Gill and later of Griffiths was put on display at the Indian Museum, South Kensington, both times the exhibitions caught fire and were destroyed. From 1909 to 1911, Lady Herringham and her team of assistants from Calcutta succeeded in producing a set of watercolour copies of some of the paintings and these were published in a beautiful volume by the India Society in 1915. However, she

wrote, "In reality, the technique of the original work was so sure and perfect that none of us were good enough executants to repeat it."

As for photography, there have been several attempts in the past. However, in the early part of the twentieth century, the technique of colour photography and emulsions were not sufficiently developed to capture the colour accurately. In the latter part, the ASI had prohibited the use of strong lights inside the caves, in order to protect the paintings. Strictly limited attempts to photograph some of the panels with the aid of strong lights were allowed, but these too failed to produce accurate results. In 1967, ASI published a book on Ajanta, edited by its Director General Dr. A Ghosh, which included 85 plates in colour. The photographic plates are all close-ups of the figures in the paintings, as, in the words of the Editor, "Circumstances at Ajanta do not make it possible to take photographs of large scenes … the colour on the surface, shiny with shellac under artificial light, reacts differently from place to place…."

When I first showed the slides which I had taken of the paintings in 1991 to Mr. M. C. Joshi, then Director General of the ASI, he remarked, "You have really conquered the darkness." Subsequently, Mr. Sadashiv Gorakhshekhar, the late Dr. Karl Khandalavala, the late Dr Stella Kramricsh and many others who had truly loved Ajanta, were very kind to say to me that in these slides they were seeing the colours and details of the Ajanta paintings clearly for the first time.

CD: Could you tell us, in detail, about the special techniques that you have used while photographing the caves, given that you are always aware of your dual role/responsibility – that of protecting the caves and allowing your audience a better view of the walls?

BKB: Essentially this manner of photography entails a very careful study of the faint light which falls upon the paintings, from place to place, whether it be from the distant door or from the dim artificial lights installed in the caves. One has to also select a good film (in my case, Ektachrome 100 ASA) and use it over a long period of time to study its behavioral characteristics.

Normal exposures last only for fractions of a second. In low light, one has to take extremely long exposures to create accurately-lit photographic images. As one progresses into exposures of longer durations (of many seconds and even minutes), the film begins to slow down in its response to further light which impinges upon it. This is known as the "failure of reciprocity" of the film. One has to use the film and study its "failure" at different lengths of exposure and learn how much to compensate for it. A careful study of the colour temperature of the available light has to be made so that appropriate filtration may be provided to capture the complete range of colours, without any colour casts.

Above all, an attitude of great patience and dedicating oneself to the work as a labour of love becomes most important in carrying out concentrated and extremely detailed work of this kind. Every

detail and every step has to be approached with a sense of deep commitment and diligence. All this, I suppose, became much easier for me as I fell in love with the art in front of me in the dark caves. The paintings appeared to reach out from the walls through the many hours of each day that I spent there and to caress my consciousness with the balm of deep compassion. The paintings and the sculptures at Ajanta present a view of the world which takes us far from the clamour of material life. It is a tranquil world where one may lose oneself in the stillness of beauty and of love.

Since the photography of the Ajanta paintings, it has been my desire to carry the message of their beauty and gentleness to others, who may also benefit from the marvellous sentiments which they evoke. I have been fortunate to have been invited to show these slides and to give talks at universities and museums all over the English-speaking world.

As strong lights and flashes are known to fade the colour of paintings, this manner of low-light photography may be of immense value in photographing paintings all over the world. I do also believe that the attitude of patience, which comes naturally in working with extended exposures, also may help photographers to imbibe the message and feelings of the fine works of art before them.

CD: Have modern techniques/equipment/processes been of aid in photographing Ajanta?

BKB: Techniques and equipment keep improving in all spheres today. This photography, however, is based upon an attitude of working constructively and with diligence and patience, with the facilities which happen to be available.



Fig. 1 Visvantara Jataka, Cave 17, Ajanta, Maharashtra, 5th century

The painters' understanding of perspective is seen in the receding pillars and in the elliptical mouth of the pitcher. The curving strings of the purse that Princess Madri dangles in her hand, are a marvellous depiction of movement.



Fig. 2 Worshipper Gathering Lotuses, Sittannavasal, Tamil Nadu, 9th century

The figure is made with a lilting grace, like the stalks of the lotuses he gathers. The flowers are painted with a great sense of tenderness and beauty and are as large as the humans and animals in the painting.



Fig. 3 King Rajaraja Chola and Guru Karuvurar, Brhadisvara, Tamil Nadu, 11th century

This is the earliest royal portrait in Indian painting. In keeping with ancient traditions, the Guru is given importance and the king is shown standing behind him.



Fig. 4 Goddess Tara, Alchi, Ladakh, 11th century

This is a depiction of the Goddess as a saviour. She is surrounded by representations of many Fears and the figures turn to her for protection. There is a sense of animated movement caught in these tiny figures, as the goddess stands in dignified majesty.

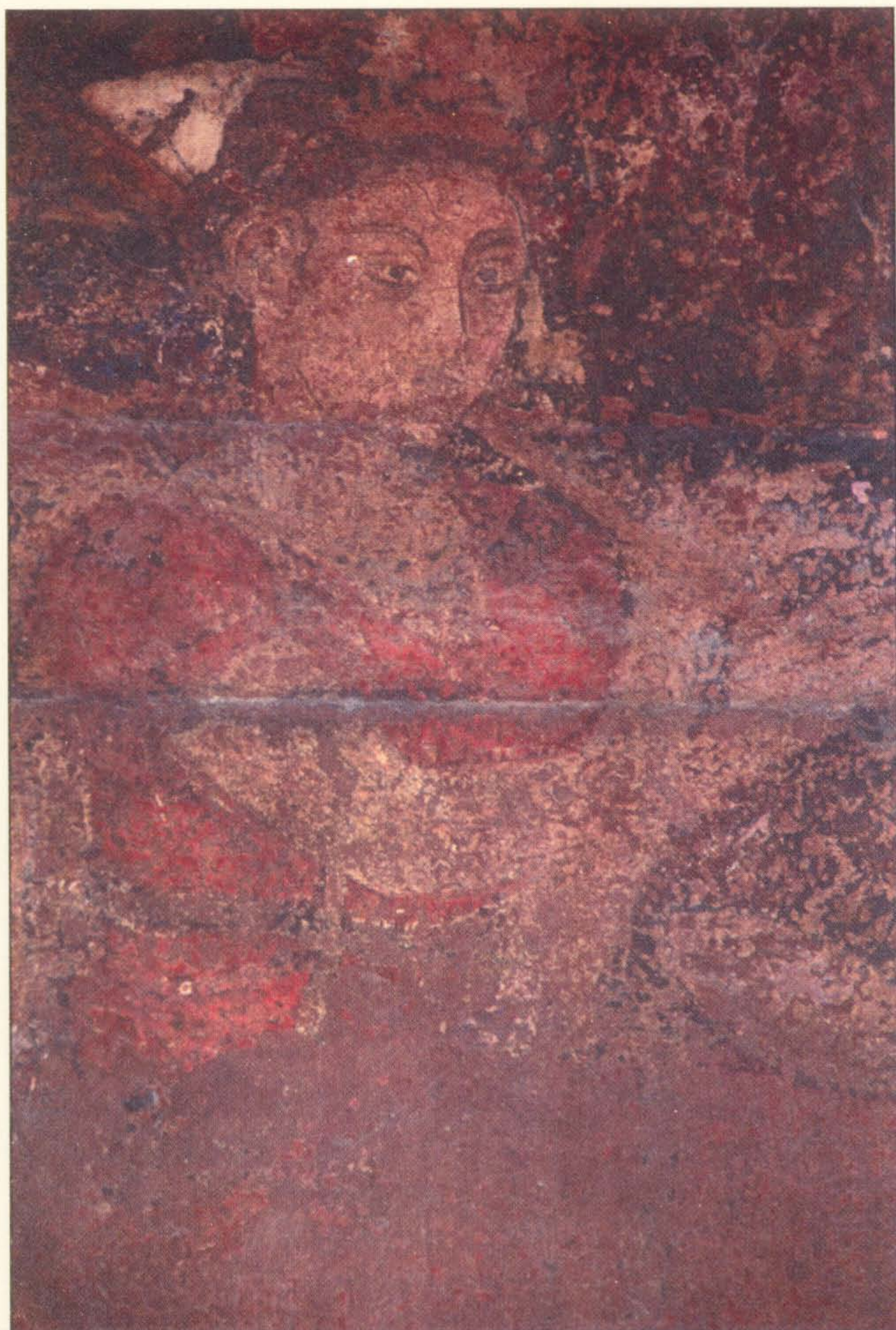


Fig. 5 Flautist, Fatehpur Sikri, 16th century

Though Mughal miniatures are extremely well-known and celebrated, the fact that murals were also commissioned by the Mughal emperors is known by very few. This painting is in the interior of Mariam's Palace and depicts a western lady playing the flute.



Fig. 6 Parvati with her Companions, Lepakshi, Andhra Pradesh, 16th century

This lively painting reflects the cosmopolitan culture of the Vijaynagar Empire. The rich and varied textiles are remarkable. The angular features and protruding further eye exhibit the pan-Indian medieval traditions of painting.



Fig. 7 Krishna with a *Gaja*, Bhojanshala, Amer Palace, Rajasthan, 17th century

These simple yet sophisticated drawings have an easy and natural sense which is reminiscent of ancient Indian art. The twinkle in the eye of the elephant is in keeping with the Indian artist's sensitivity towards all forms of life.

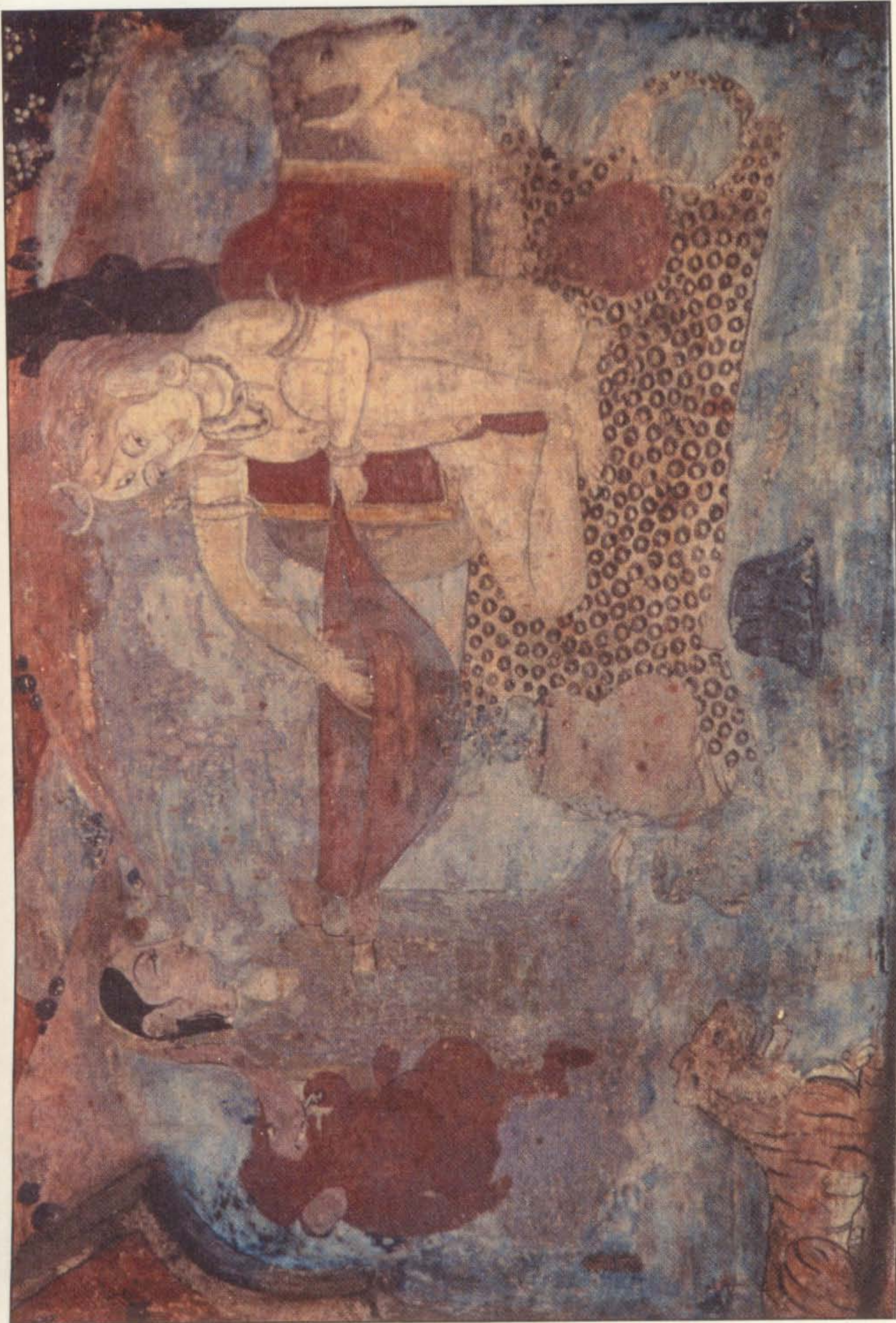


Fig. 8 Shiva, Shivdwala Temple, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh, 18th century

The paintings of the Shivdwala temple in Chamba reveal a world of beauty and innocence. Shiva is depicted with great tenderness as a gentle and loving god.



Fig. 9 Lakshmana Sharpening an Arrow, Viranchinarayan Temple, Orissa, 18th century

While Lakshmana sharpens his arrow, monkeys and other animals are engaged in playful activity. The angular and stylised idiom of painting, seen here and in the manuscripts of Orissa, travelled to Bali in Indonesia, where it is seen till today.



Fig. 10 The gorge of the Waghora River in which the 31 caves of Ajanta are made. The caves were made in two phases: one around the 2nd-1st century BC, in the time of the Satavahanas, and the second in the 5th-6th century AD, under the patronage of the Vakatakas. In both periods, the kings were Hindu and they also patronised monastic establishments of Buddhist monks



Fig. 11 The Padmapani, the Bearer of the Lotus, signifying the Peace of the Spirit, mural painting, 5th-6th century, to the left of the entrance to the main shrine of Cave 1. This Bodhisattva, a Being on the Path of Enlightenment, is painted in the midst of all the activity of life. Yet he looks within. It is this life of the spirit which has been the focus of the art of ancient India. There is a sense of peace and stillness in this painting which takes us to an inner sanctuary, far from the clamour of the material world.

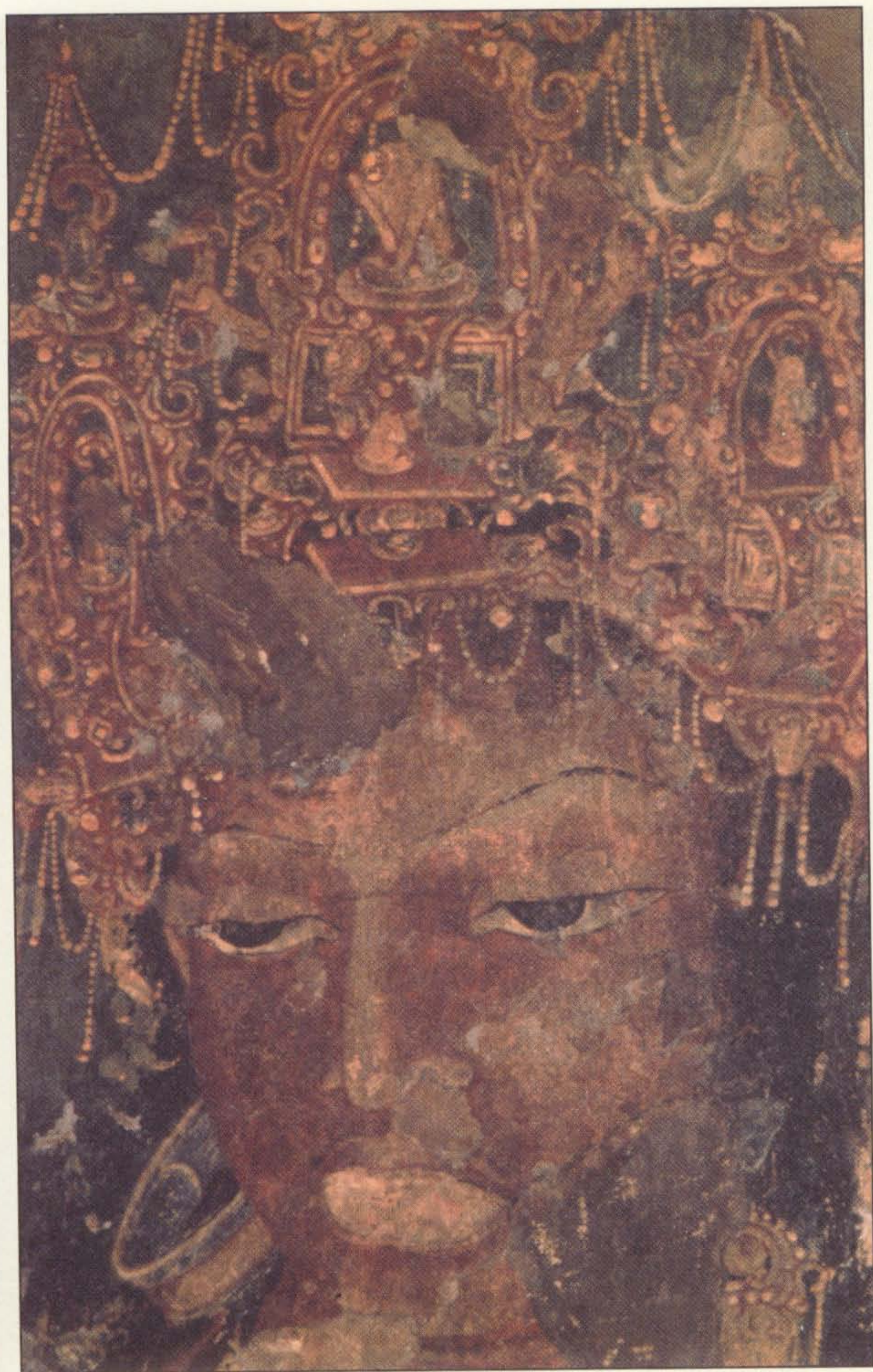


Fig. 12 Vajrapani, the Bearer of the Thunderbolt, painted to the right of the entrance to the main shrine of Cave 1. This grand Bodhisattva with a magnificent crown brings to us the Majesty of the Spirit.

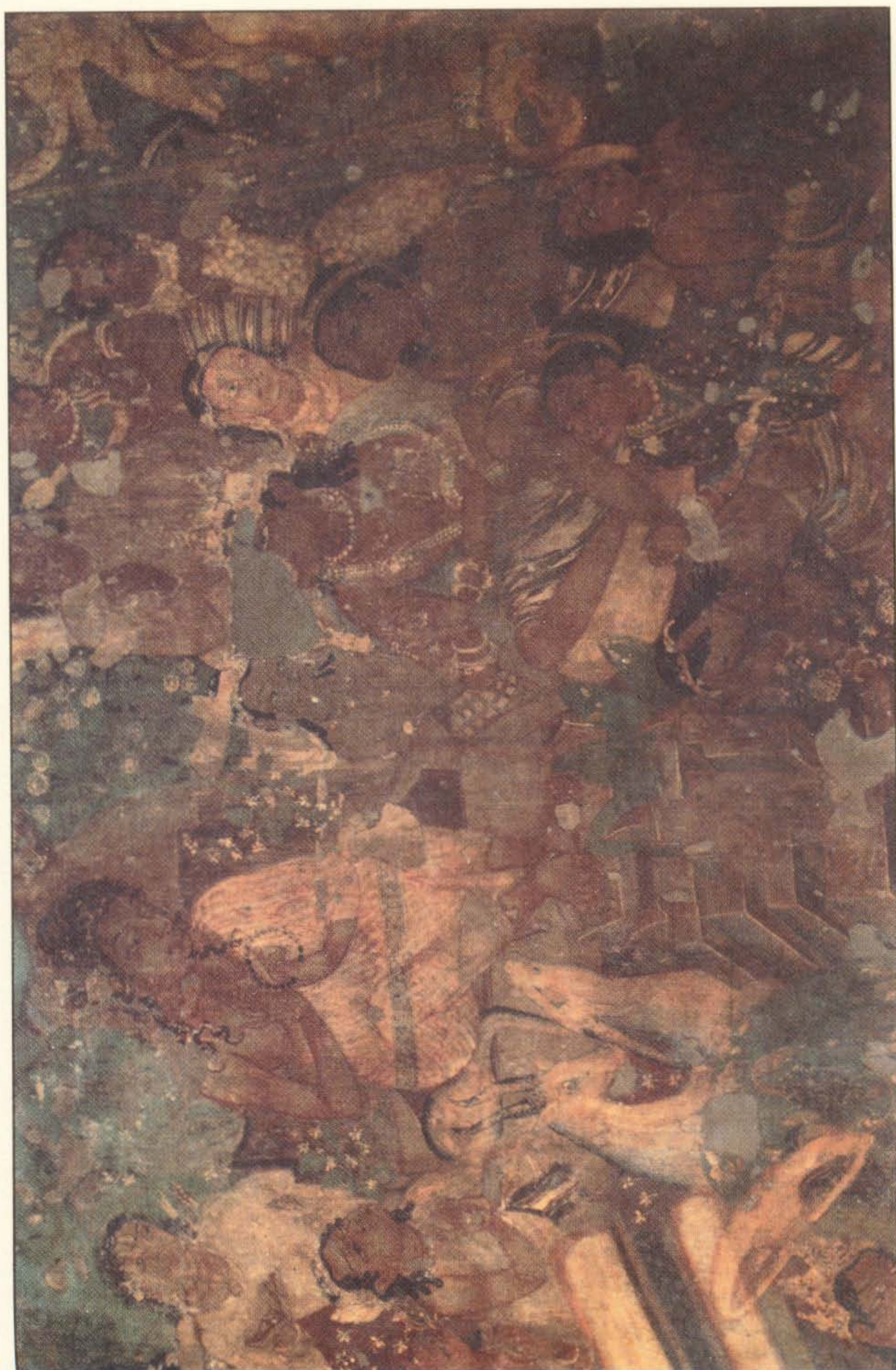


Fig. 13 On the left wall of Cave 1 is a scene from the Mahajanaka Jataka. Here, King Mahajanaka, who is a previous birth of Lord Buddha, listens to the sermon of a hermit. Though he is a great and powerful king, his folded hands and the look of adoration upon his face, are a fine lesson in humility.



Fig. 14 A Palace Scene, Mahajanaka Jataka, Cave 1. Here we see the Bodhisattva, King Mahajanaka, after he has heard the sermon of the hermit and decided to renounce his worldly life. Before him is Queen Shivali, who is saddened by the news that the king will leave her and go away. Her eyes are made exactly in the manner prescribed in the Chitrasutra of the Vishnudharmottara Purana, to show that she is sad and is weeping.



Fig. 15 The *Abhisheka* or Ritual Bath of King Mahajanaka, before he sets out on his new life of Renunciation. The wealth of detail, the shading on the pillars and the perspective in this painting, are remarkable. The Bodhisattva's hair appears very convincingly wet, as the water is poured from above. A notable feature in this panel is that white spots are painted in the pupils of the figures, to create a brightness in the eyes.



Fig. 16 Visvantara Jataka, verandah of Cave 17. Prince Visvantara was the last birth of Lord Buddha, before he was born as Siddhartha, who would gain Enlightenment. Here, in the pavilion, we see him with his wife, Princess Madri, as he informs her that his father has banished him (on account of excessive generosity against which the people of the land protested) and he will have to leave the palace, to lead an ordinary life. He suggests to her that she should remain in the comforts of the palace. On the left, we see him stepping out of the palace gate and Princess Madri is seen accompanying him. We also see a section of the painted ceiling where a wealth of flora and fauna has been painted.

Paradigm of Hindu-Buddhist Relations: Pachali Bhairava of Kathmandu

Sunthar Visuvalingam and Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam

Sunthar Visuvalingam received his Ph. D. in Sanskrit/Indian Philosophy from the Benares Hindu University in 1984 for his thesis on "Abhinavagupta's Conception of Humor: Its Resonances in Sanskrit Drama, Poetry, Hindu Mythology and Spiritual Praxis." *He is currently a freelance consultant after having worked as Director of Research and Development at Pearson Education (InformIT) till 2001.*

Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam received her two Ph. Ds in the early 80s in Ethnology and Philosophy from the University of Paris-X and the Benares Hindu University respectively for her research on the Hindu god Bhairava. An abridged version of her French D. Litt. (1995) was published under the title Bhairava: terreur et protection. Mythes, rites et fêtes à Bénarès et à Katmandou, *(Brussels: Peter Lang, 2003). She currently teaches French literature and philosophy in Chicago.*

Introduction

DESPITE HIS SUPREME POSITION in a number of Tantric schools including the very brahminised and prestigious currents of Kashmir Shaivism, Bhairava, the *kshetra-pala* (protector of the local territory), seems, at first sight, to have a modest place beside the other gods of Bhakti in the Hindu pantheon. But in Nepal, where the tribal substratum is still very visible in the social organisation of the Newars, this savage god is probably the most popular and omnipresent of the pantheon. Among his singular manifestations, Pachali Bhairava is not only the most important but also the one that best illustrates the indigenous character of his worship and his penetration into Nepalese culture. His temple, beside a cremation-ground on the Bagmati river, is above all frequented by (twelve families of) Hindu farmers (and earlier by Buddhist oil-pressers) living in the southern part of Kathmandu for whom he serves as the clan-deity. The annual festival, celebrated during Dasain, provides the occasion for the transfer of (the jar of) Pachali Bhairava from one farmer family to the next and also requires the specialised participation of members of several Buddhist castes. The twelve-yearly festival that takes place on the day of Vijayadashami, just after the annual festival, is characterised by an exchange of swords, supervised by a "brahmin" Vajracharya, between the Hindu king and a low-caste gardener possessed by Bhairava (or by his consort Bhadrakali). Through their nine-month long Nava Durga dances at various strategic points in the Kathmandu Valley, these Buddhist gardeners universalise the king's ritual identity and ensure the renewal of his power and kingdom. The primordial role of the Tantric Bhairava in the cosmogonic festivals finds its counterpart in the fact that the Vedic Indra, "the king of the gods," still retains his ancient

privileges in Newar religion. Though the worship of the various gods of the Hindu pantheon is Tantric in content, the symbolic articulations of the different levels and moments of their cult during the annual festival of the royal Bhairava make no sense except in terms of the transposition of a Vedic sacrificial schema. From a structural perspective, the brahmanicide Bhairava, the Tantric god par excellence, simultaneously represents the consecrated "pre-classical" *dikshita* (sacrificer) who regresses into an embryonic state charged with death, evil and impurity, and the shamanising adept endowed with magico-religious powers while in a state of possession. Instead of attempting to retrace the "roots" of Tantra back to an extra-Vedic textual or sectarian tradition, this anthropological study approaches the phenomenon as deriving from the translation of Vedic symbolic structures into a parallel, alternate and even counter-tradition that would have facilitated the acculturation of tribal communities to the caste-society. The real force behind the Buddhist challenge, which in this way also assured its own identity in the face of the enveloping Hindu order, derived from its privileged relations with cultures alien to Brahmanism. The religious struggle, which was intense in India, paradoxically saw Buddhism adopt the structures of Hinduism, which, in turn, interiorised Buddhist values and innovations. Newar civilisation is a "Hinduised" sacred world where Vedic, Buddhist and tribal elements are fused together in a mythico-ritual synthesis that has never been seriously challenged by renunciation. The Tibetan cycle of the subjugation of Rudra, in which a transgressive Tantric adept is made to undergo a redemptive death by a Bhairava-like divinity, can even provide the framework for deciphering the soteriology underlying the public representations of death in Benaras, "the great cremation ground" of the Hindu universe. It is no doubt this homology, between the esoteric psycho-physical practices of Tibetan Tantricism and the Hindu sacrificial ideology, that is expressed in the Newar belief that Kathmandu is the halting-place of (Pachali) Bhairava in his frequent flights between Lhasa and Benaras. In the final analysis, however, the "Tantric" Bhairava would have conserved a Shamanic experience of transgressive sacrality within the very heart of Indian religious culture.

Sunthar Visuvalingam*

A. Between Veda and Tantra: Towards an Acculturation Model of Hindu-Buddhist Relations

> Among the many spiritual traditions born and developed in India, Tantra has been the most difficult to define. Almost everything about it – its major characteristics, its sources, its relationships to other religions, even its practices – are debated among scholars. In addition, Tantrism is not confined to any particular religion, but is a set of beliefs and practices that appears in a variety of religions, including Hinduism and Buddhism. This book explores one of the most controversial aspects of Tantra, its sources or roots, specifically in regard to Hinduism. The essays focus on the history and development of Tantra, the art history and archaeology of Tantra, the Vedas and Tantra, and

* This section is dedicated to Professor F. B. J. Kuiper who, with his thorough schooling in "Indo-European" studies, has done so much to rehabilitate the Near Eastern, Dravidian, Munda and Shamanic contributions to the Vedic tradition.

> texts and Tantra. Using various disciplinary and methodological approaches, from history to art history and religious studies to textual studies, scholars provide both broad overviews of the beginnings of Tantra and detailed analyses of specific texts, authors, art works, and rituals. (Harper and Brown, *Roots of Tantra*, back cover)

The roots of Tantra[1] – a religious outlook, doctrine and practice that pervades Indian culture as a whole – are perhaps coeval with the equally ill-defined roots of "Hinduism" itself. The presumably "authoritative" lead article in this most recent collection of studies devoted to the problem begins by conjuring away the very existence of "Tantrism" (thus toeing the line of the latest "Indological" fashion of affirming that "Hinduism" itself is only a recent invention?):

> The beginnings of the Hindu Tantric traditions are all the more difficult to find in that Tantrism is a protean phenomenon, so complex and elusive that it is practically impossible to define it or, at least, to agree on its definition. Is not this difficulty due to the fact that we see and try to define an entity that does not really exist as such? Even if we do not go that far, even if we do not endorse H. V. Guenther's remark that Tantrism is "probably one of the haziest notions and misconceptions the Western mind has evolved," the fact

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[1] The original French version of this paper (1989-91), by Elizabeth alone, focused on the problematic of Newar kingship – the articulation of its profane and sacred dimensions, its symbolic function within a sacrificial model of society, and the king's relationship to the Hindu pantheon – for it was requested for a collective volume on "Classifying the Gods." In the subsequent English version (1991-2000), I attempted to contextualise Elizabeth's theses within the larger problematic of the Veda-Tantra and Hindu-Buddhist polarisation of Indian religious culture for a collection of essays examining the "roots" of Tantra. After awaiting nine years that also saw my personal interaction with other contributors at a conference in Los Angeles in March 1995 around this volume, we eventually received the following letter (only upon enquiry): "It is with deep regret that we are returning [in 2002] the article that you submitted [in 1991!] to the *Roots of Tantra*. Although SUNY Press has accepted the bulk of the manuscript for publication, the readers for the press felt that your article did not quite blend in well with the overall direction of the book. We are herewith returning you the edited version of your article in the event that you might want to submit it to another forum. Please know that Robert and I have agonized over the return of your article. It has great scholarly merit. We were not really given any options however; our only alternative was to turn down the publications' offer and go hunting for another press. For the sake of the project, we decided to conform to SUNY's request. We thank you for your submission and wish you well in finding another venue. Sincerely, Katherine Anne Harper, Ph. D., Associate Professor of Art History." This has been the third time in a row that SUNY Press has turned down contributions from myself to different volumes against the "expressed wishes" of the editors. *The Roots of Tantra* has been critically discussed online at our Abhinava forum (see n5 below).

Updated in September-October 2003 for publication in *Evam*, the current version also records the debate, since Elizabeth's first ethnographic presentation in Paris, over several issues in the interpretation of Newar religion (and, ultimately, of "Hindu" tradition), especially the retention, role and significance of a "tribal shamanic" substratum (see n32 and n33) and the symbolic identification of the king with the sacrificial victim, both of which have been already addressed in Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava and the Goddess," and where G. Toffin seems to have reversed his stance in his own contribution to the volume (see also n18). More significantly, I attempt, in the concluding section, to respond to the reservations regarding Elizabeth's resort to my conceptualisation of acculturation and transgression as aspects of a single problematic peculiar to "Hinduism," that were expressed, during her defense of her state-thesis, by Prof. Jan Heesterman, who was otherwise the most enthusiastic in his reception of the paradigm of "transgressive sacrality." Prof. Antonio de Nicolás, philosopher and poet, also provided constructive (and enthusiastic) feedback, just prior to final submission, on our underlying theoretical paradigms as developed across several papers, including this one. We are grateful to the editor of *Evam*, our friend Prof. Makarand Paranjape, for having graciously and patiently extended this opportunity – the space, time and encouragement – for us to clarify our "acculturation" model of Indian religious history. I would not have resumed these (more than just) "scholarly" pursuits if not for the autonomous "politico-cultural" space that is being created by Rajiv Malhotra and the Infinity Foundation: I seize this opportunity to thank Rajiv for supporting our project on Abhinavagupta and the Synthesis of Indian Culture. The issues at stake are of too vital consequence for Indians at large to be left in the (often unscrupulous) hands of professional Indologists.

remains that Tantrism is, to a large extent, "a category of discourse in the West," and not, strictly speaking, an Indian one. As a category, Tantrism is not – or at any rate was not until our days – an entity in the minds of those inside. It is a category in the minds of observers from outside. To use the fashionable jargon of today: it is an etic, not an emic, entity.

The term Tantrism was coined by Western Indologists of the latter part of the nineteenth century whose knowledge of India was limited and who could not realize the real nature, let alone the extent, of the Tantric phenomenon. They believed that the practices and notions they discovered in Hindu and Buddhist texts named Tantra (hence Tantrism) were something very particular, exceptional, and limited, contrasting sharply with the general, respectable, field of Indian philosophy and religion, a particular domain one could easily circumscribe. But with the progress of studies in these fields one came to realize that, far from being a limited phenomenon, Tantrism was in fact something vast, diffuse, diverse and very difficult to define satisfactorily. Mircea Eliade was perhaps the first to point it out, when he wrote in a book published in 1948 that, after the fifth century C.E., Tantrism became a pervasive Indian "fashion" (*une "mode" pan-indienne*). Neither in traditional India nor in Sanskrit texts is there a term for Tantrism; no description or definition of such a category is to be found anywhere. We know also that, more often than not, Tantric texts are not called Tantra….

Tantrism, thus, would be quite simply the various forms taken over the course of time by large sections of Hinduism or Buddhism. Depending upon the background, the origins, and the local influences, the evolution was more or less marked by a rejection of the orthodox Vedic rules and notions; it included more or less local autochthonous cults and beliefs, local religious behaviors, and magical and/or other practices. All of this resulted in the more or less "Tantric" character of the different groups concerned. But, whatever the case, the variety of Tantra that baffles us might very well be nothing more than some of the ways in which Hinduism or Buddhism were actually understood, believed, and practiced by Indian, Tibetan, and Chinese practitioners during the last two millennia. These various religious forms we may decide to call Tantric in order to differentiate them from older or different forms of the same religions, but we ought not try to set them apart as a particular religious entity that we choose to call Tantrism, an entity that probably never existed as such.

We would thus be rid of the difficult notion of Tantrism. This would be very convenient! But is it possible? I am not sure. I fear we still have to toil to find a solution to the problem of Tantrism. (Padoux 17, 23-24)[2]

A working definition of Tantrism must begin by distinguishing this outlook clearly, even if only minimally, from Vedic sacrifice, world-

[2] It is surprising that an authority on "Kashmir Shaivism" would not start from the fact that Abhinavagupta's writings, for example, often make a clearcut distinction – indeed a veritable "ideological" opposition – between the *bhairavagama* ("traditions of Bhairava") and other transmissions, particularly the Vedic orthodoxy (even while affirming that the essence of the former permeates all of them!). It seems to me that a consideration of Tantra (or of Buddhism, for that matter) should begin with what is most distinctive within its self-representation. Padoux's (admittedly inconclusive) argument is suspiciously similar to, and even less justifiable than, that being used to dismiss "Hinduism" as a legitimate category simply because "Hindu" was never used as a self-descriptive term by those who held its tenets. Ultimately, such pronouncements are merely translating the inability of the "Indological" taxonomy to account adequately for the nature of the object studied into claiming its very non-existence. But is this is so surprising, after all, coming from an Indologist who declared, already in his Ph. D. thesis, that Abhinava, being an Indian, does not see the contradictions in his own thought?

renunciation, the magico-religious power invested in kingship, Shamanism, Yoga, Bhakti and "popular" (including goddess) cults, but with the intention of eventually accounting for and "justifying" its coexistence with and compenetration of all these other domains and expressions of the vast range of Hindu-Buddhist religious experience: a bodily "technology" for perfecting the individual that gradually took on the shape of a self-sufficient corpus of beliefs and techniques that all these other traditions could draw upon and adapt to their respective frames of values and perceptions. Its various elements may have very well pre-existed within Vedism, temple-worship, Shamanism and as unsystematised forms of "Yoga" but Tantrism may be said to have been constituted as a recognisably distinct current only when they were extracted, reformulated, systematised and integrated into the coherent corpus of a shared pan-Indian tradition. Unlike the public drama of the Vedic sacrifice performed by Brahmin officiants for ensuring *svarga* (heaven) for those twice-born wealthy enough to pay for their exclusive services, Tantric *sadhana* (practice) is an individual discipline of interiorisation whose transmission is in principle available to everyone irrespective of caste. Though certain Tantricised sects, like the Pashupatas and Kapalikas, were composed of renouncers, they were not averse to the cultivation of *siddhi* (power) and even espoused (transfigured modes of) radical sensuality. While admitting and even prescribing the elaborate worship of deities, Tantra is more concerned with incorporating their powers than in relishing a subservient devotion towards an external(ised) God. Whereas the "secularised" Hindu king could draw simultaneously upon the twin resources of the Brahmanical sacrifice and left-handed transgression to affirm his quasi-divine temporal dominion, the Tantric rites epitomised by the "royal" *abhisheka* ("consecration") are intended to confer on even the lowliest adept a more fundamental *svatantrya* (spiritual autonomy). Indian householders participating in popular festivals and pilgrimages may well be living out a symbolic universe that is derived from, and sustained by, such an esoteric understanding, but it is the Tantric adept who effectively "realises" their meaning within his/her own inner experience. Nothwithstanding general typologies that go beyond the subcontinent, the two primordial currents of out-of-body experience distinguishable as (Austro-Asiatic and Tibeto-Burman) "shamanism" and (Dravido-African) "possession" are manifested as localised phenomena inseparable from the communal life of specific ethnic groups. The phenomenology of the Tantric experience – as exemplified in *avesha* ("possession") by Bhairava – is not simply reducible to either one of these currents.

It is thus conceivable for one to be a Tantrika without claiming to adhere to any of these other modes of religious practice or endeavour. Many of its elements – such as the use of mantras (sound syllables), *yantras* (geometrical shapes), breath-control, meditative practices, esoteric physiology (such as the chakras), etc., to focus the mind, transform one's self-representation and the nature of consciousness itself – may be found dispersed in similar and/or altered forms and not only within these other Indian traditions. But nowhere else in the world do they seem to have found a religio-cultural environment, a

civilisational laboratory, so conducive to their crystallisation into a self-standing "technology" of the individual (non)self that has found canonical expression in a closely knit family of distinct yet cross-fertilising *agamas* (traditions). Tantra, in the final analysis, would denote not so much a distinctive set of codified beliefs and ritual practices – much less a (learned) textual tradition – but a specific vantage point within the Indian semiotic system that would "reduce" the latter to the outer expression of a common denominator of core esoteric techniques, the representations that surround and support their practical implementation, and above all, the extraordinary experiences and transformations that constitute their sole end and justification for the individual aspirant. In the fundamentally oral/visual culture of ancient India, the study of Tantra lies less in the uncertain history of the "written manuscript" and the dispersed geography of epigraphic finds but in the systematic decipherment of the larger "text" of a shared religious culture within which these documents are themselves embedded and of which they are the ephemeral precipitates.[3]

The still unresolved controversy over the relative priority of Buddhist over Hindu Tantras, narrowly understood as sectarian textual traditions, is itself symptomatic of an inadequate conceptualisation of the role of Buddhism in the formation of not only Hinduism but of Indian civilisation as a whole.[4] Nowhere perhaps is the inadequacy of such a text-based approach more apparent than in the still surviving Newar cult of (Pachali) Bhairava, which defies comprehension in terms of sectarian categories. Its symbolic universe resists reduction even to a Hindu-Buddhist "Tantrism" that would be opposed to Brahmanical ideology, on the one hand, and to Shamanic practices on the other. Unlike both Vedic and "primitive" religions, however, Tantric soteriology already presupposes the cultural supremacy of the ideal of individual moksha/nirvana (liberation) as propagated especially by Buddhism. At the same time, it reflects the imperative of revalorising the world, the human body and even the exercise of (royal) power in social relations from this transcendental standpoint. This incomplete movement of "return" to an immanent mode of sacrality that Hinduism co-opted on the politico-cosmic and aesthetic-emotional levels through the symbolic universe of Bhakti, resulted in a cultural synthesis that permitted the retention of indigenous

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[3] For example, in the absence of explanatory texts, the meaning of Bhairava is best reconstituted by an analysis of his origin-myth, Ganesha through the details of his iconography, and the *Vidushaka* (clown) not so much from the existing treatises on dramaturgy but from his own behaviour in the Sanskrit plays themselves. Lorenzen's contribution ("Early Evidence for Tantric Religion") to *Roots of Tantra* simply ignores Elizabeth's constructive critique (in "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide") of his manner of reconstructing the history of the Kapalika "sect" and persists in restricting evidence of such "roots" to surviving written testimony alone.

[4] This theoretical difficulty is especially well-illustrated by the recent intellectual flip-flop by Madeleine Biardeau to whom we otherwise owe so much for our understanding of the anthropology of Hindu civilisation (*L'hindouisme*). Whereas her earlier work takes for granted, if not explicitly insists on, the "self-sufficiency" of the Brahmanical frame of reference – a topic on which I had repeatedly taken issue with her even in private discussions – her most recent and voluminous rendering of the *Mahabharata* now claims that this Hindu epic reflects and responds to the menace of (emperor Ashoka's embrace of) Buddhism seen by the classical brahmins in "apocalyptic" terms. The thesis upheld in this paper is a more nuanced one: Buddhism was seen as a "life-and-death" challenge, no doubt, and right down to the eleventh-century Abhinavagupta, but its contributions at every level were also admired, studied and readily assimilated as a living resource for the renewal of Hinduism.

cults and forms of social organisation within a dominant "Aryan" discourse.[5]

1. Hindu-Buddhist Convergence in Pre-Islamic Kashmir

The examples of Buddhist Logic, the *shanta-rasa* (sentiment of tranquility) and the cult of Bhairava – drawn respectively from the domains of philosophy, aesthetics and religion – should suffice, for our present purposes, to illustrate the cultural significance of Abhinavagupta's ambivalent treatment of the Buddhist heritage just before the Islamic invasions of the twelfth century. Indian philosophy derives primarily from Brahmanical-Buddhist debate over the status of the world. Buddhists renounce the world by underlining its suffering, unreality, impermanence and by negating the Self, whereas Brahmanism, as a whole, attempts to reconcile the transcendent principle with life-in-the-world. The Buddhist critique of reality is first *vibhajya-vada* (analytic), then logical (the Madhyamika principle of non-contradiction) and finally epistemological (the Yogachara-Sautrantika attack on Nyaya categories as mental constructs). Abhinava's "Pratyabhijna" or "Doctrine of Recognition" presents itself as the synthesis of all the otherwise incompatible schools of Hindu philosophy. Above all, it is a systematic defense of the traditional Nyaya-Vaisheshika categories (substance, quality, action, relation, etc.), as the only possible basis of all *loka-vyavahara* (worldly transactions), against the critique of Buddhist Logic. Yet, its sophisticated epistemological analysis wholly follows the methods of Dharmakirti (and Dharmottara) in rejecting the Nyaya insistence on the externality of the world. The result is an inclusive non-dualism that, unlike the Advaita of Shankara or the Vijnanavada of Vasubandhu, affirms the reality of the world but as internal to Consciousness. The acceptance of the principle of momentariness results in a dynamic conception of the world and of the Self, as ultimately invested with the creative power of Ishvara (the Lord). Bhartrihari's earlier defense of (Vedic) *agama* (tradition), though now pitted against the *tarka* (logic) of the Buddhists, is ultimately identified with (supra-human) *pratibha* (intuition). The Shaivas of Kashmir have used the Buddhist critique of the independent reality of the world, as generally espoused by the orthodox Brahmanical schools, in order to restore *svatantrya* (an absolute autonomy) to the supreme Self. The historical course of this philosophical debate reflects a shift in perspective from the clear-cut choice between the Brahmanical insistence on the external authority of Vedic scripture and the uncompromising Buddhist rejection of the world, to a shared Tantric worldview that affirms the creative power of the absolute Consciousness, irrespective of the status

[5] I am currently editing a series of collective volumes on *Abhinavagupta and the Synthesis of Indian Culture*, and this may be taken as an invitation to specialists of Tantrism, scholars of Indo-Tibetan Buddhism and anthropologists of Indian religions to bring their valuable expertise to bear upon this interdisciplinary project. Also visit our homepage at <http://www.svabhinava.org/abhinava/> for contributions online. Our papers on Bhairava, the *Vidushaka* (clown of the Sanskrit drama) and transgressive sacrality (not just in Hinduism), including all those listed in the Works Cited at the end may also be found in sister areas of the above svabhinava site. You are also welcome to discuss the theses defended in this (and our other related) paper(s) at the "Light of Asia" Hindu-Buddhist <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Hindu-Buddhist/> and/or Abhinavagupta "Indian Traditions and World Culture" <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/Abhinavagupta/> forums.

of the individual self or of the world.

It is evident that the passages on the *shanta-rasa* (sentiment of tranquility) in Bharata's treatise on dramaturgy, the *Natyashastra*, had been interpolated into some manuscripts as a response to its effective use by the Buddhists to promote the ideal of renunciation through poetry and theatre. Orthodox Hindu dramaturges refused to accept *shanta* because the traditional eight emotions were sufficient to account for *pravritti* (activity) in this world in pursuit of the legitimate *purushartha* (life-aims). The only sustained example of the viability of *shanta* that Abhinava, in his ambivalent defense, is able to provide, is the play *Nagananda* on the Bodhisattva Jimutavahana, which was written by the "Hindu" king Harsha, who, however, longed to end his life in the robes of a Buddhist mendicant. The presiding deity he stipulates for *shanta* is, not surprisingly, the Buddha himself. Abhinava ultimately justifies the necessity of *shanta* by appealing to the supreme pursuit of moksha (liberation), arguing that it underlies all the other "mundane" *rasas* as their common denominator. Does this signal the triumph of the Buddhist renunciation ideal within the heart of Hindu sensibilities? Not quite! For Abhinava integrates *shanta* in such a way as to leave the existing scheme of *rasas* intact and even concedes that it is impossible to represent "tranquility" in its pure form on the stage, that it needs to be supplemented by extraordinary modes of the other *rasas*. He hardly speaks of *shanta* in his Tantric writings, but exults in the experience of *rasa* in the context of hedonistic activities like eating and sexual intercourse. Abhinava refers approvingly to Buddhist theories of *rasa* as a "stream of consciousness" and, by then, even monks like Dharmakirti had begun to write very sensuous poetry in Sanskrit. The endorsement of the Buddhist *shanta* has resulted not in the rejection of the world-drama but in its appreciation in an aesthetic mode (Visuvalingam, "Towards an Integral Appreciation of Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics of Rasa").

The religious inspiration behind the Shaiva philosophy and aesthetics of Kashmir came from the Tantric cults of Bhairava. By that period, Mahayana Buddhism had already attained its radical Vajrayana phase and shared much in common with Hindu Tantricism. Esoteric texts, which were inaccessible to laymen, nevertheless passed back and forth between Shaiva and Vajrayana adepts, and Trika texts even found their way into Tibetan hands. The manner and degree to which such shared Tantricism may have permeated Kashmiri society may be better appreciated by studying Hindu-Buddhist collaboration in the Kathmandu Valley, which has remained free of both Muslim and Western domination. The socio-cultural dimension of Tantricised royal festivals, especially their trans-sectarian significance, has been very well conserved in the Newar cult of Pachali Bhairava which is, in other respects, peculiar to Kathmandu. Especially evident is the clan-based "tribal" infrastructure of Newar society, with the "shamanising" phenomena of trance and possession. Not only do the Newar Buddhists, who are integrated into the caste-system, venerate the Hindu pantheon, their quasi-brahmin Vajracharya priests are often the principal officiants for the Hindu community, especially at the royal level of the Bhairava-cult, the ritual structure

of which is derived from the paradigm of the Vedic sacrifice. The development of Buddhist Tantricism seems to have contributed not so much to the abandonment of the Brahmanical tradition but to the generalisation and consolidation of its symbolic universe even quite independently of the direct mediation of the Hindu brahmins who originally came from India.

2. Why Was World-Negation Necessary in the First Place?

In practice, Buddhism ends up accommodating life-in-the-world so totally that, especially with the emergence of Vajrayana Tantricism, the differences with Trika Shaivism become purely doctrinal, a question of a "language-game." On the other hand, Hinduism (e.g., in Shankara's Advaita Vedanta) ends up largely interiorising the Buddhist ideal of (world-negating) renunciation. The ambivalent status of Buddhist Logic, *shanta-rasa* and Vajrayana practices within the philosophical discourse, aesthetic sensibility and religious practice of "Hinduised" culture reflects this gradual convergence of the Brahmanical and Buddhist paradigms. Apart from the Muslim destruction of its monastic institutions, the common textbook explanation for the death of such a hoary millennium of Buddhism in its homeland is its re-absorption by a rejuvenated and enveloping Hindu religious culture (e.g., the well-known Bhakti movements in Kashmir, South India, Bengal and elsewhere). This however raises the even more formidable question as to why, in the first place, the birth of Buddhism was at all necessary?

Renunciation presupposes a desacralised world, denuded of meaning, which is hence rejected in favour of transcendence. It has no permanent place in the this-worldly sacrality that characterised the mythico-ritual universes of both Vedic and tribal societies. Yet, as attested among the Newars, Buddhism seems to have played a crucial role in the elaboration of a synthesis between Brahmanical and tribal cultures. The perennial transcendent values enshrined in the Buddhist tradition notwithstanding, its socio-historical role seems to have been primarily that of facilitating a process of acculturation in which the Vedic symbolic universe ends up becoming the dominant unifying force throughout the subcontinent. Buddhism, along with other more short-lived heterodox movements, emerged in Magadha of the sixth century BC, where the Aryan Kshatriya (aristocracy) had already begun to question the sacrificial order. A similar trend in the Brahmanical heartlands to the west had instead resulted in the gnostic speculations of the Upanishads still centred on the Vedic Revelation. Even more important was the explosion of mercantile activity and the opening of trade-routes to the south, north and elsewhere, which created the arteries through which Buddhist missionary activity could peacefully spread to pre-Aryan populations and even adapt indigenous cults to its own ethico-rational and egalitarian outlook. The "secularising" cultural milieu witnessed the incorporation of tribal republics – like those of the Vrijjis and Licchavis whom the Buddha admiringly set as a model for his own *sangha* – into the growing imperialism of the Magadhan state. The cultural necessity of Buddhism was dictated by the breakdown of Vedic authority at the point where the still "pastoral" Aryan

values came into headlong collision with indigenous populations within the emerging and expanding context of a new level of politico-economic organisation.[6]

From the time of emperor Ashoka, Buddhism seems to have been the most dynamic religious force in unifying the subcontinent. Kashmir (an early stronghold of Sarvastivadins), Bengal (especially under the Vajrayana dominated Pala dynasty), South India (fifth to eighth centuries), Nepal and other regions have all passed through a phase of Buddhist dominance before their eventual Hinduisation. Benaras, subsequently the socio-religious centre of classical Brahmanism, was itself associated with heterodox and pre-Aryan cults around the time of the Buddha, who supposedly set the Wheel of the Law turning at Sarnath for the benefit of his five brahmin disciples. The leadership of this proselytising religion was increasingly taken over by converted brahmins who shared the same cultural ethos as their orthodox adversaries. At the same time, the renunciation of Brahmanical society opened these scholar-monks to far greater possibilities of freely experimenting with pre-Aryan modes of religious experience. The intellectual and socio-political power and prestige of Indian Buddhism certainly came from its common roots in the dominant Aryan culture, but its driving force, appeal and dynamism seems to have derived from its privileged relation to societies external to Brahmanism. This universalising but world-negating religion seems to have been destined, by the constellation of factors conditioning its very birth, to provide a common language for cultural communication between the otherwise closed universes of South India, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Tibet, China and Japan, with their own particularistic and ethnically oriented religions like Dravidian folk-cults, local forms of Shamanism, Bon, Taoism, Confucianism and Shintoism. Little wonder that Buddhist emissaries from these Asian countries were generally received with such honour by even Hindu kings and their brahmin counsellors.

In its religious rivalry with Buddhism, Hinduism was in turn obliged to gradually interiorise successful Buddhist innovations and to legitimise them within the framework of the Vedic tradition. Through the so-called process of "Sanskritisation" (a misnomer, especially in the Newar context), the sacrificial universe was increasingly propagated and consolidated by non-brahmins and even by religious specialists of non-Aryan origin. This was facilitated by an underlying compatibility between the purified Brahmanical sacrifice and the cults of possession and bloodletting

6 It has been noted, no doubt correctly, that the mentality that praised the savage side of life is precisely the urban, and not the rural, mentality, and that this attitude of renunciation can only be considered a revealing indication of the changes that occurred in India in the middle of the first millennium BC, when the ancient Vedic society articulated into distinct clans gave place to a much more complex world in which the food surplus, the population increase, the emergence of cities and the brisk commerce between them, permitted the hatching of this urban mentality that so valorised the absence of cities. The title of the book, then, implicitly refers to this paradox: the wisdom of the forest was born from the weariness of the city and with the eagerness to rehabilitate and affirm the non-social and transcendental dimension of man. (Ilarráz and Pujol; translation here from the original Spanish is mine)

This tension between the urban life and its renunciation that provides the context for the emergence of Buddhism was, however, not new to Indian civilisation (see n36).

generally associated with Indian folk-religions. As the cultural gap between the Brahmanical and the hitherto pre-Aryan societies narrowed – and with the gradual integration of their disparate symbolic universes – Buddhism was deprived of its *raison d'être* as a socio-historical force. The only way Buddhism could survive in India was by competing with the Hindu appeal to indigenous populations, even at the cost of increasingly compromising its original world-negating posture. Radical Shaiva-Vajrayana Tantricism could be jointly opposed to both the purified extrinsic ritualism of the classical Mimamsa and the ethico-rational ethos of early Buddhist "Protestantism" (which is still retained in some measure by the Theravada Buddhism of Sri Lanka). Understood in this way, "Hinduism" appears to be not so much a fixed religious doctrine but a process of controlled acculturation that legitimises itself by referring back, directly or indirectly, to the Vedic Revelation (cf. Smith). Perhaps the best symbol of this process is the non-Vedic transgressor-god Bhairava, adopted by both Hindu and Buddhist Tantricism, in whom the figure of the consecrated Brahmanical sacrificer is wholly merged with that of the Shaman in ecstatic trance.

3. The Buddhist Role in the Hinduisation of Nepal

> But it is perhaps of greatest significance, that here alone Mahayana Buddhism has survived as a living tradition. Valley Buddhists have sometimes been pressured, but scarcely persecuted; Buddhist monuments have been destroyed by nothing less benign than time and neglect. The Katmandu Valley is thus not only an immense museum of Buddhist antiquities, but it is a unique oasis of surviving Mahayanist Buddhist doctrines, cultural practices and colorful festivals.... Buddhism has been slowly declining since about the twelfth century. Today, the process has picked up speed, and Buddhism is rapidly disappearing. But Nepali Buddhism as a living force has hardly been explored, and even its monuments await documentation. The study of Buddhist remains in the Katmandu Valley, social and physical, is urgent. (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 270)[7]

Let me introduce Elizabeth's presentation of Pachali Bhairava by providing a historical sketch of Hindu-Buddhist relations in the Kathmandu Valley along the lines of this acculturation model. The political history of Nepal is generally divided into the following periods: the pre-historic "tribal" or Kirata period, the Licchavi period from about AD 300 to 879, the following Transitional period which continued till AD 1200, then the Malla period which ended in 1769, when the Gorkhas under the still reigning Shah dynasty conquered the Newars and unified the whole of modern-day Nepal.

"On the basis of varied evidence – literary, historical, anthropological, linguistic, and that of tradition – we may then speculate that the *kirata*,

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[7] "I have read with enormous interest the papers you sent me respecting Pacali Bhairava. You are accomplishing the in-depth research I hoped younger generations of scholars would undertake based in part on the general work (*Nepal Mandala*) that I felt was a precondition. Naturally, I have nothing to add and I stand in profound awe of the depth of your scholarship." This was communicated in a letter to Elizabeth from Mary Slusser, art historian, lead author/coordinator of *Nepal Mandala*, after reading the original version of this paper. We basically share her perceptions of and sympathy for Newar civilisation, even while attempting to incorporate them within an explicit theoretical framework that would highlight their global significance for South-Asian cultural history.

metamorphosed by millennia of miscegenation and acculturation, form the matrix of the Katmandu Valley population, which in contemporary Nepal is designated Newar" (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 11). During the Licchavi period (about AD 300 to 879), the process of "Sanskritisation" and a Brahmanical ideology (of sacrifices, the institution of *panchali*, etc.) was imposed from above on the indigenous Tibeto-Burman (Kirata) population by Vedic kings (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 18-40), who were known in India rather for their "republican" values and conservation of the "tribal" aspects of Aryan culture. Like the Karkota dynasty of imperial Kashmir, these predominantly "Vaishnava" monarchs seem to have facilitated the transposition of Vedic sacrificial paradigms onto a Pancharatra Tantric mould centring on Hindu temple worship (cf. Inden). Ancient Buddhism, in spite of its rejection of the hierarchical system of social values and the pantheon of gods deriving from the Brahmanical sacrifice, was patronised fully by these monarchs who built *stupas* and gave away entire villages to the *sangha* (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 271-80). What is more, Manadeva I became a penitent in the Gum-Vihara, Shivadeva II (AD 694-705) converted to Buddhism, and Vrishadeva (about AD 400), the founder of Svayambhu Stupa, seems to have been an openly Buddhist king. The Licchavi kings evidently found in the egalitarianism and non-iconicity of ancient Buddhism an inheritor of tribal Vedism that was almost as legitimate as classical Brahmanism centred on the sacrifice. And all this even before the late achievement of the Hindu-Buddhist Tantric synthesis.

The "transitional period" (c. 879 to 1200), which has bequeathed to us so few artifacts of higher civilisation, probably saw the collapse of this *pax vedica* around a centralised authority and the affirmation of a succession of indigenous powers (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 41-51). Already present during the Licchavi epoch, Vajrayana Buddhism came into full bloom during this period of relative anarchy, when Nepal was considered a Buddhist country by the Chinese and the Tibetans who came to study there (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 281-86). The slow maturation of "Aryan" culture within Newar society must have continued under Buddhist auspices, even independently of any royal patronage. The role of the Vedic Indra, whose iconic representations do not become popular until the eleventh century, but who continues to wear Licchavi style crowns, was played by the Bodhisattva Vajrapani (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 267-69), the revealer of Vajrayana teachings. The importance of the number five in Newar Hinduism, and in the worship of Pachali Bhairava in particular, is found also in the five Tathagatas of Mahayana Buddhism: indeed, Amoghasiddhi, Vairochana, Amitabha, Ratnasambhava and Akshobhya, may have even received occasional animal sacrifices in Nepal. The spatial organisation of the Licchavi stupas (as at Patan) already reflects a pentadic structure probably derived from a Vedic paradigm. This would have been the period when Aryan cultural patterns were thoroughly indigenised by the Newars into a uniquely Nepali mould.

The ascension of the Malla king and culture-hero, Gunakamadeva, whose cultural significance seems to have been confused with that of Amshuvarman (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 45), probably indicates the turning-point at which the

ancient Licchavi patterns reasserted themselves from below, even outside of, specifically Vedic institutions. (The probably low-born) Amshuvarman (AD 605-621), the most illustrious ruler of the Licchavi period, was not only an ardent "Shaiva" but also a devotee of Bhairava who continued to generously patronise Buddhist institutions. Gunakamadeva is the legendary "founder" of Kathmandu, who would have instituted various royal festivals, including the Pachali Bhairava festival and the Nava Durga dances. Just as in Kashmir, the Tantric reworking and interiorisation of Vedic paradigms, initiated by the Pancharatras, continues under Shaiva auspices (cf. Goudriaan et al 21) during this Early Malla period (1200-1382). Esoteric Shaiva techniques for intensifying (the Fire of) Consciousness are understood by Abhinavagupta as an internalisation of the Vedic *Agnihotra*. This vegetarian "fire-sacrifice" was subsequently incorporated into a Tantric ritual framework, as attested by the Agnishala (temple to Agni)" at Patan; conversely, the Hindu-Buddhist meat-offering to the Tantric divinity Pachali Bhairava is, in turn, modelled on the Vedic paradigm. The Late Malla period (1382 to 1769) is heralded by the ascension to the throne of Jayasthiti Malla (AD 1382), who came from the royal Vaishnavite milieu of Mithila in Bihar. This Indian prince reorganised the caste system along more orthodox lines and accelerated the process of "Hinduisation" among the Newars (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 52-76). Despite their induction into the Vedico-Tantric symbolic universe and the growing hold of the Bhakti religion of classical Hinduism, the faith and religious observance of the majority of Newars still remained Buddhist well into the Shah period.

Unlike the Newars, the Gorkhas are a staunchly Hindu Indo-Nepali ethnic group that claims an "Aryan" cultural heritage. Prithvi Narayana Shah, the unifier and founder of modern Nepal, patronised Newar religious institutions (e.g., the Nuwakot Bhairavi), including Buddhist ones (e.g., by contributing to the rebuilding of the Svayambhu Stupa), even before his conquest of the Kathmandu Valley in 1769. After the Gorkha conquest, he supervised, financed and participated wholly in Newar royal festivals like the Indra and Pachali Bhairava Yatras. Despite the loss of power to the Ranas for a century (1846 to 1951), a period when Buddhism was sometimes officially discriminated against, his descendant Birendra Bikram Shah continued to patronise and participate in these Newar festivals (until his assassination on 1 June 1991; see n19). Notwithstanding the neglect of their language and culture, the Newars have enjoyed a role in administrative affairs disproportionate to their numbers under the royal dispensation of the Shahs. With the erosion of the underlying socio-ritual structures (e.g., the *guthi* system which was their primary economic basis) under the impact of modernisation, these festivals have become increasingly irrelevant to the political unity of Nepal. Paradoxically, the introduction of (parliamentary) democracy has perhaps endangered the (relatively) privileged status of the Newar minority.

Torn between genocidal communal strife and the menace of totalitarianism, our age of demystification could perhaps endorse our "Tantricising" reduction of divine kingship into a symbolic cipher for a generalised inner condition of individual autonomy.

Elizabeth Chalier-Visuvalingam*

B. The King and the Gardener: Pachali Bhairava of Kathmandu[8]

> The mysteries of Nepal Mandala have only begun to be explored by means of a hitherto neglected but major source, the oral traditions and customs of the Newars themselves. (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 122-23)

Representations of Bhairava, the terrible aspect of Shiva, are numerous in the Kathmandu Valley, where his cult is much more alive and important than in India. Images of Bhairava can be found in Buddhist monasteries as well as in Hindu temples. Bhairava dwells also in houses, fields, cremation grounds, wells, street-crossings, the four wheels of the chariot of Matsyendra-natha at Patan, and so on. Specialists of Nepal have remarked on this omnipresence of Bhairava, the scope of his festivals and, sometimes, also the peculiarities of his cult with regard to India (Nepali 298-305, 343-51; Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 235-39, and passim; Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 441-47).[9] Safe from the devastating Muslim invasions of the twelfth century and from Western influence since the seventeenth century, Nepal has maintained to the present day certain characteristics of the cult of Bhairava which have long since vanished in India. The Newar genius has also elaborated the cult of Bhairava by adapting it to its own cultural context; a prime example of this is the royal dimension of Bhairava.

The identification of Bhairava with the Hindu king is already present in India, but it seems to have been largely eclipsed by his function of *kshetra-pala*

* This section is dedicated to the memory of Punya Ratna Vajracharya.

[8] This section is based on fieldwork financed by three missions from the National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS) in October 1984, 1985 and 1988. A Lavoisier Fellowship from the French Ministry of External Affairs in 1990 had allowed me to pursue this research at the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies at Harvard University on the invitation of Prof. Michael Witzel.

The late Punya Ratna Vajracharya, a Newar scholar, helped me read manuscripts in Newari relating to the cult of Bhairava and explained to me some of the finer aspects of his tradition. I thank all those interviewed in Kathmandu, especially the *Juju* and Lakshmi Narayana Malakar. My thanks are also addressed to my research assistants, Akal Tuladhar (1984, 1985) and Nutan Dhar Sharma (1988); their friendship and competence remain precious to me. Nutan is now working with the German team at the South Asia Department of the University of Heidelberg in their projects on Nepal, Benares and South India.

The paper was originally presented (16 June 1989) to the CNRS research-group 299, directed by G. Toffin, at the Centre d'Études Indiennes (Paris), then to the interdisciplinary seminars of Prof. Witzel at Harvard on the cultural history of Kashmir and Nepal (25 April 1991), and again (jointly with Sunthar Visuvalingam) to the Harvard Buddhist Studies Forum (5 November 1991). Earlier full-length French versions of this article (with more abundant ethnographic details omitted in this position-statement intended for a wider audience) have benefited, in the 1990-91 time frame, from the comments of Profs. M. Biardeau, C. Jest, R. Levy, M. Witzel, Drs. H. Brunner-Lachaux, N. Gutschow, M. Slusser, G. Toffin and N. Peabody. I express my gratitude to Niels Gutschow for having agreed to draw all the maps for this article. Maria Green, at the Department of Sanskrit and Indian Studies, Harvard University, helped translate the original paper from the French. My husband, Dr. Sunthar Visuvalingam, whose knowledge of Nepali facilitated my fieldwork, contributed greatly to the theoretical developments. The present paper was a prescribed text for the Spring semester course (1992) he taught on "Heresy and Religious Change in Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam" at the Experimental College of Tufts University.

[9] Slusser goes so far as to affirm: "Wherever the Nepali is, physically or psychologically, Bhairava is not far away" (*Nepal Mandala* 235). I have already indicated the richness and the complexity of the cult of Bhairava in South Asia – above all in Nepal – with all the necessary references in my earlier articles (especially Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 157-60, 205-10).

(guardian of the local territory) and by his opposing role of transgressor-god among extreme sectarian groups such as the Kapalikas or the Kaulas. In his native land, this "popular" god has been defined especially in relation to classical Brahmanism. The Puranic origin myth, which describes the decapitation of Brahma by Bhairava (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 160-63) is much less important in the Newar tradition. This explains why the Bhairavashtami,[10] the festival celebrating the manifestation of Bhairava as brahmin-slayer is not celebrated. Through a slow evolution – no doubt assisted at first by values of ahimsa (non-violence), later by the puritanism of Islam, and finally by the rationalism favoured by the West – Bhairava-worship in India has been gradually taken over by purity-minded brahmins. In this way, his principal temples in holy cities such as Benaras, Ujjain and Haridwar are almost all in the hands of brahmin priests. It is they who manage the eight main temples of Bhairava in Benaras and the temple of Kala Bhairava at Ujjain. In these temples, they present only vegetarian offerings and, exceptionally, meat coming from animals that have been sacrificed elsewhere. Most devotees of Bhairava come and worship him on an individual basis, singing his praises just as they would for any Bhakti god. In fact, this *bhakti* (religion of love) is largely responsible for the "normalisation" of the public aspects of Bhairava-worship in India.

The importance of the royal cult is connected with the conservation of a social "infra-structure" that comes from the autochthonous substratum of the Newar culture (Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 585-93). G. S. Nepali (173-74, 299, 304) notes, for instance, that the almost untouchable and hardly civilised Du(n)yeeya(n) or Duyiya, who live on the geographical fringes of Newar culture, have Akasha Bhairava as their main deity. They call him "Sawa Dya" or "god of the tribes" (Newari: *Sawa*, Sanskrit: *Savari*), and it is they who provide the *Sawo Baku* (dancers) to incarnate Bhairava during the Indra Yatra, the royal festival par excellence in Nepal. Such considerations have led this pioneer of Newar anthropology – with whom we had the privilege of studying the Pachali Bhairava festival in October 1988 – to affirm that Bhairava is a tribal god. He is right, if this means that Bhairava played a primordial role in the Hinduisation of tribal divinities (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 191-99). But this process was so successful in India that the antecedent stages are almost beyond recognition, at least in the social organisation, even where the tradition affirms explicitly that the god – like the Oriya god, Jagannatha, the focus of pan-Hindu pilgrimage – has a tribal origin. On the other hand, the system of clans directed by *Thakali* (elders) is still operative among the Newars, and Bhairava is above all the "Aju Dya" (ancestor-god or grandfather). Several dynasties of Newar kings, in spite of their Aryan sounding names, must have surely been of tribal origin. They would have adopted Aryan religious values and social customs not only because of their cultural prestige, but also in order to extend and

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[10] Festival of the birth of Bhairava, on the eighth day of the black fortnight of the month of Margashirsha (Nov.-Dec.), which is directly connected with the Puranic origin myth (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava Kotwal of Varanasi").

affirm their political power well beyond their own communities of origin.

The Nepalese chronicles attest to several precise identifications of kings with Bhairava. The king Shivadeva (1099-1126) – son of Shankaradeva (about AD 1069-83) who restored the Vedic ritual of *Agnihotra* at Patan – is said to be the incarnation of a Bhairava from Assam. The most famous king of the Licchavi period, Amshuvarman (AD 605-21), whose mastery over Brahmanical culture was renowned as far as India, is said to have burnt human flesh as incense before a particular Bhairava (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 25-27, 337, 339). In the Newar context, the king is the centre of gravity for the socio-religious community and the bloody side of the sacrifice, rejected by classical Brahmanism, is very much in evidence. The festivals of Bhairava in the Newar tradition are intimately linked to kingship and involve the participation of the entire community. Participation is not in an individual capacity, but a function of caste, royal delegation or specialised knowledge. The public worship of Bhairava is above all in the hands of Tantric priests, be they "aristocratic" Karmacharyas (of kshatriya status), Buddhists, farmers or of low-caste like the Kusles (former Kapalikas). The relative smallness of the community of Rajopadhyayas (court brahmins) should not mislead us into underestimating the extent of their influence on the religious life of the Newar society. The ritual purity that guarantees them their rank at the summit of the Newar hierarchy does not prevent them from eating meat. They are, in effect, the depositaries both of Tantrism and Vedism, and their gurus unite the two traditions in their own persons (Toffin, "La voie des 'héros,' tantrisme et héritage védique chez les brahmines Rajopadhyaya du Népal" 19-34). "The Thakali, i.e., the eldest in the kinship unit, is the preferred choice for this duty. The Thakali is the central figure in the socio-religious life of the Newars, connected with the deepest level of the non-Indianized substratum of the population, and is perhaps an ancient tribal priest" (Tofflin, "La voie des 'héros,' tantrisme et héritage védique chez les brahmines Rajopadhyaya du Népal" 33). They no doubt played a primordial role in the elaboration of the royal cult where these two crucial aspects of Hindu religion are brought together. After all, even the brahmin Shrotiya is not only the pure being par excellence, he is above all the one who incarnates the ritual knowledge of the Vedic sacrifice. It is because of this sacrificial background, inhabited by all the high gods of Hinduism, that the royal Newar festivals remain deeply Brahmanical and even Vedic.

Buddhism, the most important contestant of the Brahmanical model, is still a major component of Newar society, in contrast to India where it has long since disappeared. Tibet adopted Tantric Buddhism from India, and Vajra Bhairava is particularly venerated by the Gelugpa school, which represents the orthodox religion. The Tibetan influence, reinforced by the commercial exchange between Kathmandu and Lhasa, played a determining role in the flowering of the Bhairava cult in Nepal. This is evident, for instance, in the "confusion" between the iconography of Buddhist divinities such as Mahakala or Samvara and that of the Hindu Bhairava. Vajrayana was already present in Nepal by the reign of Amshuvarman, and (Vajra) Bhairava, another name for Yamantaka, is mentioned in a Shivadeva

II (about AD 694-705) Licchavi inscription (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 291-92, 237, 239n101, 272, 282, 286; Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 209). Among tribes in the process of assimilation to the "great tradition", lamas compete with officiating brahmins for their place beside the shaman priest. But Newar Buddhism, which thus distinguishes itself from Lamaism, has mostly abandoned the ideal of renunciation and is integrated into a social life governed by Hindu norms with their strong concern for purity. On account of their monastic past and, above all, of their mastery of Vajrayana Tantrism, the Vajracharya priests enjoy a religious prestige (nearly) equal (even among the Hindus) to that of the Rajopadhyaya brahmins. Whereas the latter are afraid of too openly displaying their knowledge of radical Tantrism – which would only confirm their loss of status with regard to the Parbatiya (Indo-Nepalese) brahmins – the Vajracharyas, for whom the Tantric *diksha* is the central and the highest point of their religious life, seem to be the true depositaries of the royal secrets of Bhairava. On the other hand, even within the Hindu community, there is strong competition between the Karmacharya and the Rajopadhyaya for the officiating role at Tantric ceremonies (Toffin, "Culte des déesses et fête du Dasai chez les Néwar [Népal]"). But whether it is mediated by a Karmacharya or a Vajracharya, this is a Tantrism that fits into the sacrificial framework of classical India while at the same time guarding a certain autonomy with regard to the brahmins themselves. There is *de facto* collaboration among these ritual specialists in maintaining a Brahmanical model of society, in the face of the centrifugal tendencies of its communal components. And in spite of the opposition between Brahmanism and Buddhism on the religious level, such Newar phenomena can teach us a great deal about the true role of Buddhism in the great process of acculturation that gave birth to Indian civilisation.

In this way, the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley, the Buddhists included, explain with a remarkable unanimity that Bhairava came (as a king) from Lhasa, or more often, from Benaras, so much so that Bhairava is often called Kashi Vishvanatha.[11] The Benaras-Kathmandu-Lhasa axis is a constant in the ethnography of Bhairava in Nepal and, in order to demonstrate its conceptual value, we have even used Tibetan Tantrism to interpret the significance of Bhairava in the "great cremation ground" which is Benaras. The royal cult is still so much alive among the Newars that it is possible – through a global study of their cosmogonic festivals (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 183-91) – to reconstruct the royal dimension of the cult of Bhairava in his own native city beside the Ganga. What is more, by confronting the position of Bhairava in the Hindu pantheon with the Vedic sacrificial paradigm, with the core-structure of the *Mahabharata*, and with more general data from the anthropology of India, we have outlined an ambivalent model of Hindu kingship

[11] Banaras, also called also Benares, Varanasi or Kashi, is the holy city of the Hindus. The principal divinity of this town is Shiva-Vishvanatha who is invariably "confused" elsewhere with his guardian Bhairava (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava Kotwal of Varanasi").

based on a theory of transgression (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 199-205). The present ethnographic study will have the supplementary interest of illustrating the role of Tantric Buddhism within the same acculturation thesis, but this time through a detailed yet totalising analysis of a single Newar cult focused on the temple of Pachali Bhairava beside a cremation ground at the southern extremity of Kathmandu.[12]

1. Mythologiques of Pachali Bhairava, King of Pharping

Pachali Bhairava, King of Pharping (a town to the south of Kathmandu), has the habit of locking himself in a room of his palace to eat enormous quantities of rice and a goat. His wife insists upon coming and sharing his meal. The king accepts but informs his wife that he will have quite another appearance, and that she will have to throw some grains of rice on him in order to restore his human aspect. His wife is so terrified at the sight of Bhairava that she runs away forgetting to throw the grains. Afraid of being discovered by his subjects, the exposed king takes refuge in the place where the temple of Pachali Bhairava still stands today. His wife stumbles a little further on and becomes Lumarhi, the dangerous goddess Bhadrakali whose temple stands at the edge of the Tundikhel field.

In another version, Pachali Bhairava has the habit of leaving Pharping each morning to bathe in the Ganga at Benaras and returning to Kathmandu in the form of a handsome man. In this way, he seduces a young girl of the butcher caste (Nepali: Kasai) who tends a troop of pigs near the temple site. In other accounts, he is a Jyapu (farmer) who thus breaks all the rules of caste. Before long, she too becomes curious and he finally agrees to reveal himself provided she throws some grains of rice as soon as she sees his real identity. She too forgets and flees as soon as she is confronted by her grotesque lover. Bhairava pursues her through the night, but day starts to dawn and he seeks to hide himself. He reaches a cremation ground and wraps a bamboo mat around himself, such as the Newars use for their dead. This one had in fact been used to bring a corpse to the cremation ghat. He has no time to disappear totally underground and the stone venerated today is his buttock! Another version explains the close relationship of the Kasai caste with the god Ganesha. The seduced butcher girl becomes pregnant and her fear at the grotesque appearance of her lover provokes the premature birth of the child, who is adopted by the Kasai. The child is none other than Ganesha, who is venerated by the butchers of South Kathmandu in the form of a small bronze statue attached to a drum that they play during different ceremonies.

Punya Ratna Vajracharya related yet another account in which Bhairava is not a king but a Jyapu: Bhairava walks with his daughter Kumari and his son Ganesha during the festival of Indra. Bhairava's wife, Ajima (also of Jyapu caste), is jealous because she is not with them, and asks Bhairava to stroll with

[12] There are, of course, partial descriptions in Nepali 303-04, 347-50; Anderson 156-63; Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 238-39; and Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 444-46. The cult of Pachali Bhairava has, however, never been studied systematically, at all its levels, and certainly not with the intention of deciphering the significance of Newar kingship.

her around Kathmandu. He agrees, but not during the Indra Yatra. That is why during the Pachali Bhairava festival, Bhairava walks with Ajima through Kathmandu. During the Indra Yatra, the procession of the Kumari or Virgin-Goddess is in fact accompanied by Ganesha and Bhairava, but in this context, Bhairava (like Ganesha) is a small boy of the Buddhist Sakya caste. The boy's Sakya family regularly sends a tray of offerings to the temple of Pachali Bhairava. We may already note the strong symbolic link between the royal festival of Indra and that of Bhairava.

2. Pachali Bhairava Temple and the Dualist Structure of Kathmandu

The word "Pachali" could be a corrupt form of the Sanskrit word *pancha-linga*. During the reign of the Mallas (thirteenth-nineteenth century), this god was known under the name Panchalingeshvara (Lord of the five Lingas) or Panchamurti Lingeshvara. It is even said that there are five *lingas* hidden under the stone that everybody can see today on the altar. But for Slusser (*Nepal Mandala* 235, 239; cf. 47-48), Pachali Bhairava would have been rather the god of a *panchali* of Dakshinakoligrama, a village that corresponds roughly to the southern part of modern Kathmandu. The Licchavi (third-ninth century) institution of *panchali* or *panchalika* – precursor of the modern panchayat – was an administrative subdivision whose members feasted together in the name of their divinity. This practice is still conserved in contemporary associations called *panchi guthi* that have charge of several Bhairava statues. Thus the underlying socio-ritual conceptions do not seem limited to the cult of Pachali Bhairava, nor even to Bhairava as a particular god. In the *Mahabharata*, legitimate "kingship" is expressed by the hierarchical internal structure of the five Pandava brothers whose union is symbolised by their common wife, Draupadi-Panchali (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 174-77). In Nepal, this *krishna* (black) heroine is identified with the goddess Bhadrakali, the wife of (Pachali) Bhairava. Her most favoured husband is Arjuna, model king and son of Indra. He incorporates the totality of the five brothers, as is also clear from the fact that his conch is called *panchajanya*, term derived from *pancha jana* (five tribes). The ritual paradigm perhaps dates back to the tribal origins of Vedic culture, when the five tribes still had a social reality.

The opposition between the lower (south), *Yangala*, and the upper (north), *Yambu*, halves of Kathmandu dates back to the Vedic Licchavi dynasty, when the village of Dakshinakoligrama was still a distinct entity, apparently more important and more populated than the rival village of Koligrama to the north (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 87-95).

> From the 11th to 13th centuries, three distinct dynasties, all bearing the same name of Thakuri, succeed one another. First to come are those who claim to be the descendants of Amshuvarman, and who reign until about 1050. Then come the Vaisya Thakuri of Nuwakot, who reign until 1082. Under these first two dynasties, the institution of the double kingdom, *dvai-rajya* or *ubhaya-rajya*, is in full force. The kingdom is a single entity, but is divided into two parts, each managed by a different king ... The two kings were united by kinship; they were two brothers, a father and a son, or a maternal uncle, and his nephew, etc.... This institution, which is briefly

mentioned in the *Arthashastra* (VIII.2), is historically attested only in Nepal. It is doubtless to be connected with the partition into a kingdom of the North and a kingdom of the South of the Licchavi times.... It perhaps still survives, in a manner, in the dualist structure of the Newar agglomerations of the Kathmandu Valley. [It is only in 1200 that] the king of Thakuri origin, Ari Malla, founds a new dynasty: the Mallas who will reign till 1769. (Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 35-36)

The vestige of this politico-ritual dualism, which also provides the underlying structural paradigm of the Mahabharata, "war"; (Visuvalingam, "The Transgressive Sacrality of the *Dikshita*" 454, 462n69), is found in the continuing existence of two Newar *Jujus* (kings) residing respectively in the south and north of Kathmandu. Man Singh Malla belongs to the sub-caste of the Thaku-juju, descendants of the ancient Vaishya Thakuri kings, who live primarily in the Bhimsen-than (south) and Thamel (north) in Kathmandu. The *Juju* is the direct descendant of Gopushya Thakuri. The role (of the ancestor) of the *Juju* in the time of the Mallas was most probably very similar to his present role under the Shah dynasty. The southern part or the lower part of the town (Newari: *kotva*) is, in this way, opposed to the upper part (Toffin, "Les aspects religieux de la royauté néwar au Népal" 69). The *Juju* of the North has no connection with the worship of Pachali Bhairava. Under the Mallas, the Thaku-juju were still very important in the political life of the Valley. After the unification of Nepal by the Gorkhas, however, they lost all their power. Nevertheless, the ancestor of Man Singh received the authorisation from Prithvi Narayana Shah to continue celebrating the annual festival of Pachali Bhairava. For the Thakuri, who claim that their ancestors founded the cult of Pachali Bhairava, the god is also their "Aju Dya" or "grandfather." Man Singh Malla lives in the Kva Baha near the Bhimsen temple which belongs to him. In his temples, Bhimsen is flanked by his younger brother, Arjuna, and by their common spouse Draupadi-Bhadrakali. While the "ideal king" receives only vegetarian offerings, Bhimsen, whom the Newar explicitly identify with Bhairava, receives blood sacrifices (Chalier-Visuvalingam, *Étude préliminaire du culte de Bhairava dans la Vallée de Katmandou*). The worship of Bhimsen, so dear to the Thaku-juju but also popular among the tribal people (Nepali 322), is therefore not foreign to the cult of Pachali Bhairava and its royal dimension.

Most of the chronicles, for example the *Bhasha-vamshavali* (Malla 5-6), explain that it was the king Thakuri Gunakamadeva (AD 924-1008) who established the worship of Pachali Bhairava. The god is very much associated – at least in the Newari imagination – with the founding of Kathmandu, because it was this same king who is traditionally believed to have founded both the town and the festival. He would have brought the Nava Durga to the Kathmandu Valley, would have started the festival of Indra Yatra, the Lakhe dances, and so on. He would also have instituted, on the advice of the god Karttikeya-Skanda, the ritual conflict – including human sacrifices – that took place between the *Yambu* (north) and the *Yangala* (south) of the town during the festival of Sithi-nakha, precisely in order to prevent his subjects from revolting (Anderson 66-71; Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 339). The

political institution of the double kingdom was abolished by 1484 at the latest, when Ratna Malla made Kathmandu his kingdom, but the socio-ritual structure and the practices derived from it are still preserved (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 91). I was repeatedly informed that the kings of Patan were involved in the annual festival of Pachali Bhairava and that a puja tray is still sent by their descendants, who are called precisely Bhairava Malla, living in Mangala Bazaar at Patan. This would correspond quite well to the historical role of the *pitha* as a neutral place for diplomatic exchanges between the rival kings of Kathmandu and its twin town of Patan (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 239).

Gunakamadeva himself would have come from Pharping and the god Pachali Bhairava would be no more than the hypostasis of this Thakuri king. The cult of Pachali Bhairava, involving the annual rotation of a pot among the Jyapu families, does indeed exist in this village at the southern rim of the Valley. Even today, if somebody from Pharping is found among the spectators of the Malakar dances of Kathmandu, he is immediately promoted to the rank of *Thakali* for the duration of the dance. Pachali reigned in the past over Pharping with the goddess Dakshinakali as his queen, and it is said that he will come back to his native village when the road from Kathmandu to Pharping is full of houses. It would seem that the Vedic paradigms of Pachali-worship at Kathmandu had been established by the Licchavis. Amshuvarman, whose palace seems to have been in the modern district of Jaisideval, where the Jyapus of the south live (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 119-23), was already a devotee of Bhairava. The first Thakuri of Kathmandu claimed to be descended from Amshuvarman, though his name had been removed from the Licchavi genealogies, doubtless because of his suspect origin (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 25, 30, 42). The "Thakuri" king Gunakamadeva, who is the real architect of the modern form of Pachali Bhairava-worship in Kathmandu, could well have been of equally humble origins.

The first reference to Pachali Bhairava is an inscription of AD 1333 that was discovered in the Maru Sattal or Kashthamandapa at the centre of Kathmandu (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 147). This wooden building, which marked the northern boundary of *Yangala*, seems to have been the royal council chamber and the temple of Pachali Bhairava. The god is invoked as witness to a political treaty and as the guardian of certain funds deposited as a pledge in this temple. Towards the beginning of the twelfth century, this part of the city was called Kashthamandapa from which is derived the modern name of the city, Kathmandu. In 1379, the King Jayasthiti Malla gave this Sattal to the Natha ascetics connected with the worship of Bhairava (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 367). Their descendants, the Kapalikas or Kusle Yogins, continued to live there until recently (1966), when they were turned out so that restoration of the building could be begun. The Kashthamandapa still provides shelter today for a statue of Gorakthnatha and is still associated with the worship of Pachali Bhairava. Locke adds that "customs still current among the Buddhist Newars of Kathmandu indicate that the building also had had Buddhist associations" (434).

The *pitha* (open sanctuary), one of the most ancient temples of Bhairava in

Table of the different castes participating in the cult of Pachali Bhairava

Participants (by caste-affiliation, from daily cult to twelve-yearly festival)	**Daily Cult** at Pachali Bhairava *pitha*	**Annual Festival** Pachali Bhairava Yatra	**Twelve-Yearly Festival** *khadgasiddhi*
Maharjan (Jyapu) Hindu farmers; Twelve families of the Dangol sub-caste; Guardians in turn of *pitha* and *dyahche*	*Thakali* (Eldest) in clan is Achaju (temple priest) for a year	His nephew incarnates Ajima Day when family changes and children undergo tonsure	(Bhairava jar has rotated through all twelve Jyapu families)
Manandhar (Salmi) "Oil-pressers"; Hinduised Buddhists	(May have been involved earlier)	Children undergo tonsure, erect pole and carry torches	
Sakya Buddhist caste of goldsmiths, etc., who have received first initiation. Provide five-year old boy-Bhairava for the royal Indra festival	Clean the Pachali jar three times a year. Family regularly sends offerings		
Juju "king," descendant of ancient Vaishya Thakuri M. Man Singh	Sends *puja* plate on Saturdays. (Has own temple to Bhimsen)	Patron of festival: steals jar from Jyapus, performs *kasi puja*, *mamsahuti*, etc.	Just carries the royal fan for the current Shah king
Karmacharya Tantric priest Lava Ram; Karmacharya Srestha (division Chathariya)		Directs all the Tantric *puja* (rituals) for the *Juju* (role formerly assumed by a Joshi)	Mere observer
Sthapita (sub-division of Buddhist Tuladhar merchant caste) Ratna Panna		Assists the *Juju* and the Karmacharya/co-patron	Mere observer
Kumari "virgin goddess" from Buddhist Sakya caste		Impassively witnesses buffalo-sacrifice before royal palace	
Chitrakar three groups of Buddhist painters: (a) Yoga Raj Chitrakar (1st day); (b) Mane Bahadur Chitrakar (3rd day); (c) Prem Chitrakar (4th day)		All three groups participate: Jar sent to Jaisideval home; Cleans jar with a dried fruit; Feeds Pachali and repaints eyes	Prem Chitrakar prepares masks for Malakar dancers nine months before
Malakar (Gathu) "gardeners" (Buddhist group directed by) Lakshmi Narayana Malakar; live at foot of Svayambhunatha Stupa		Play special music sacred to Bhairava during the rituals, and follow the procession of the Pachali Bhairava jar to the door of the royal palace	Bhairava (or Kali) dancer exchanges swords with king/ perform Nava Durga dances for nine months
Kasai (Khadgi) Hindu "butchers"; Purna Bahadur Ganesha	(Participates in rituals of *Juju's* Bhimsen temple)	Incarnates Ganesha to carve sacrificial victims in his arms; enters trance with Ajima	(no longer perform sacrifices as before)
Rajopadhyaya "court-brahmin" (originally from Hindu Bhaktapur); lives now at Brahma *tol* (quarter)			Sponsors comic dance of vegetarian Sweto Bhairava
Vajracharya (Gubhaju) Buddhist priestl; (a) Badri Ratna Vajracharya; (b) Babukaji Vajracharya	Performs *puja*	(*Puja* for individual families)	Directs *khadgasiddhi*
Shah Gorkha royal dynasty ruling since Prithvi Narayan's conquest of the Kathmandu Valley from Mallas in 1769. Birendra Bikram Shah (1972 till now)		Sends royal sword from the old Malla palace in Hanuman Dhoka and provides young male buffalo for sacrifice	Funds Nava Durga dances/exchanges swords with Bhairava (or Bhadrakali)

Kathmandu, is situated in the south of the modern town near Tekudoban at the confluence of the Bagmati and Vishnumati rivers. It is very close to the cremation ghat on the Bagmati – the Ganga of the Kathmandu Valley – and is surrounded by other, non-riverine, cremation grounds. Under the shade of a big Pipal (*ficus religiosa* = banyan) tree, on the altar of the open sanctuary, there is a stone representing Pachali Bhairava, around which there are stones that symbolise his *gana* or attendants (map 1, see p. 171). Facing the altar is the Vetala in human form on which blood sacrifices are performed (pic. 1, see p. 172). Because of the similarity of Pachali Bhairava with the human buttocks, people coming from the plains of India made fun of the sacrificial practices of the Newar. So king Pratapamalla (seventeenth century) covered most of the original emblem leaving only this stone for the sight of the devotees. What is underlined here is that Bhairava represents impurity, above all the impurity of death.

3. The Structure and Participants of the Daily Rituals

"In Katmandu, the Jyapu farmers who still represent a third of the population of the old town are spatially distributed in four sectors, each associated to a particular temple: Svayambhunatha (Simbu) and Lutimaru Ajima at the north-west, Bhadrakali at the south-east and Pacali at the south" (Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 485). The principal devotees of Pachali Bhairava are farmers and oil-pressers who live in the southern part of Kathmandu. At the daily level, the farmers are the most involved because they maintain the open-air temple, called a *pitha*. The Achaju (Tantric priest) who performs the daily rituals is none other than the *Thakali* (eldest male member) of the family currently in charge of the open-air temple. The daily rituals are performed, morning and evening, by the farmer guardians and by a Buddhist "brahmin" Vajracharya priest (pic. 3, see p. 172). They offer, among other things, eggs, goats, and above all, poultry to Pachali Bhairava, but the animals are never sacrificed on the altar itself but only on the Vetala (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 337, 362). Every Saturday, a tray of offerings from the house of the *Juju* is brought in the open-air temple for the daily ritual. Special rituals are also celebrated on the eighth day of Dasain (Maha-Ashtami) and on Pachare or Pishacha-chaturdashi, a three-day festival beginning on the fourteenth day of the dark fortnight of the month of Chaitra (March-April).

In the Newar tradition, each god has generally two temples. One is situated outside the town, and the god is venerated there in the open-air temple called a *pitha*. The other is inside the town, and the god is venerated in a closed temple called a *dyahche* in Newari (cf. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 326). This *dyahche* is, in fact, a special room inside the house of the family who keeps the Bhairava jar. In the closed temple, Pachali Bhairava is represented by and worshipped as a jar (Newari: *tepa* or *kom*) filled with beer (pic. 2 see p. 172). Its guardian must perform a ritual during Tihar, a five-day festival beginning on the thirteenth day of the waxing fortnight of the month of Karttika (October-November). The Sakyas (a Buddhist caste) are responsible for cleaning the jar three times a year, during the festivals of Tihar, Ghantakarna and Pachare. Beside the Bhairava jar, an oval-shaped silver bowl called *patra khola*, representing Bhairava's wife

Ajima, is also venerated by the same family. The *dyahche* which shelters the divine image for a limited period is sometimes confused with the *agache*. The *agache* is also a closed sanctuary within the city where the lineage divinity is kept for an unlimited period of time. "The only difference between the *agache* and the *dyahche*, is that in the first case the divinity never leaves its temple, whereas in the second case it is exhibited before the eyes of the public once a year during its procession to a temple (*pitha*) situated outside the locality" (Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 83n16; also cf. chs. 18 and 20). The *agache* of Pachali Bhairava is in fact in the house of the *Juju*.

What is puzzling, already at this level of the cult, is that a Buddhist priest, (Babukaji) Vajracharya, performs the daily morning ritual, which follows that performed by the Achaju from the Hindu Jyapu caste. The relation of the Buddhists with the open-air temple of Pachali Bhairava appears to be quite ancient, for they associate this divinity with Svacchanda (Lalita) Bhairava (Malla 6). Described by Hindu Tantras used in medieval Kashmir as "white, five-faced (the embodiment of the five Brahma *mantras*) and eighteen-armed, he is worshipped with his identical consort Aghoreshvari, surrounded by eight lesser Bhairavas within a circular enclosure of cremation grounds. He stands upon the prostrate corpse of Sadashiva, the now transcended Shiva-form worshipped in the Shaiva Siddhanta" (Sanderson, "Shaivism and the Tantric Traditions" 669).

Pachali Bhairava had also a very important role in the ritual life of the former caste of oil-pressers, the Manandhar. They are Buddhists and employ a Vajracharya as a priest, but this has not prevented them from being very Hinduised and, in fact, they worship all the Hindu gods (Nepali 171). Until very recently, they used to shave the heads of their sons in the *pitha* on the fifth day of the annual festival, in *a rite de passage* by which the boys became adults integrated into their caste. The Manandhar still carry torches to light the path of the annual procession of Pachali Bhairava. According to Toffin (*Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 580), a mask of Bhairava, who is their lineage god, to be venerated only by the initiated, changes residence each year, passing successively into the house of every member of the *guthi*. This corresponds very well to what happens with the Pachali Bhairava jar among the Jyapus. Until 1885, the oil-pressers were an impure caste and their own account of the story connects their livelihood with the (accidental) killing of a child. It is hence not surprising that they should be called upon to provide the music during funeral processions. It is the Manandhar who erect the pole of Indra at Kathmandu during the Indra Yatra and who carry it, after the festival, to the cremation ghat near the Pachali Bhairava *pitha*.

4. Rotation of Pachali Bhairava Jar during the Annual Festival

During this annual festival, the Pachali Bhairava jar that is usually kept inside the closed temple is moved on the fourth day to the *pitha* (open temple). At the end of the festival, on the night of the fifth day, the Pachali Bhairava jar will be put into a different closed temple where it will stay for one year. In all, there are twelve *dyahche* (closed temples), all belonging to the Jyapu of the southern part of Kathmandu. On a rotation of twelve

years, the Jyapu are, first of all, guardians of the open temple of Pachali Bhairava for one year. They then take guardianship of the Pachali Bhairava jar in the closed temple. This heavy bronze jar, on which is engraved an image of Pachali Bhairava, measures over twenty centimetres in diameter (pic. 2, see p. 172). The *Thakali* (eldest male member) of the Jyapu family that keeps it must perform a daily ritual in the closed temple throughout for one year.

The annual festival of Pachali Bhairava starts on the first day of the waxing fortnight of the month of Ashvina (September-October). The jar is carried by the Jyapus from the closed temple to the house of the Chitrakar (painters) in the Jaisideval quarter, where it will remain until the fourth day. On the third day, the painters of Votu *tol* (quarter) come to clean the jar with a dried fruit (Newari: *phaka*). On the fourth day, the painters of Bhimsen district come to feed the god, following which the ritual offering of wine and beer (Newari: *galpay thanegu*) is performed by the *Juju*. There are thus three groups of painters, all Buddhists, involved in this annual festival. The principal role goes to the painters of the Bhimsen district, who must paint (or repaint) the eyes (Newari: *drishtikam negu*) of the divinity who is engraved on the jar (cf. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 237). They are also responsible for decorating the door of the new *dyahche* of the Hindu Jyapus.

The *Juju* still plays the role of the sacrificer or the patron of the sacrifice (Sanskrit: *yajamana*) in the annual festival, an essential role in which this Hindu "king" is assisted by the Buddhist Sthapita or "carpenter" (Newari: *sikhami*). On the first day of the festival, it is Sthapita Panna Ratna who receives the farmers of the *dyahche* in order to give them the authorisation to carry the jar from their home to the painters. His is the responsibility of preparing all the ritual materials for the annual festival of Pachali Bhairava, and it is he who is responsible for the *Mamsahuti* (see below). Among other duties, he must ritually position the Pachali Bhairava jar on the altar. The obligation of participating in the annual festival was first laid upon the Sthapita by the Malla dynasty. It is a hereditary duty, passed from father to son, involving only himself and not his community. His role exceeds that of a simple assistant of the *Juju*, and one often gets the impression that this Buddhist of the sub-caste of Tuladhar merchants is as much the patron of this festival as the *Juju* himself. This is in spite of the fact that Pachali Bhairava is neither his lineage divinity nor his personal divinity. Punya Ratna Vajracharya told me how the Malla kings of Patan became linked to the worship of Pachali Bhairava after the arrogant but futile attempt of their ancestor to fill the Pachali Bhairava jar with gold coins. In the "sacrifice" called *tuladana*, which was very popular till Malla times, the patron used to give his own weight in gold and in jewels to the god (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 74, 217). This Tuladhar (literally "the one who holds the scale") could easily have been the intermediary who weighed the king for such a *atmayajna* (sacrifice of the self).

A ritual of invitation (Sanskrit: *nimantrana* puja) is performed late in the night of the third day by the Karmacharya accompanied by the *Juju* and the Sthapita. The Karmacharya performs rituals to invoke gods both surrounding and within the *pitha*, like Ganesha and Sweto Bhairava, before proceeding to the platform (Newari:

phalca) where the Pachali Bhairava jar will be put first. The Sthapita and the *Juju* must participate in a more elaborate ritual performed on the altar itself which is covered with flowers of a particular plant (Newari: *kanasva*). The Sthapita must, among other things, wash the gods that are around the altar with (a pot of water which has been consecrated with) three uncut lemons (Newari: *tasi*). Having finished, the *Juju*, the Sthapita and the Karmacharya proceed northwards from the Bhairava *pitha* to perform the ritual of leave-taking (Sanskrit: *visarjana* puja) inside the Machali-pitha. Machali is, in fact, Matsyeshvari or "The Goddess of the Fish" who is identified also with one of the three Siddhilakshmis. In Nepal, there are three Siddhilakshmis: this one, another in Bhaktapur near the Akasha Bhairava temple and a third one, Purnachandi, at Patan. "The Newars, who maintain the early traditions of the region, preserve [Guhyakali's] link with the Northern Transmission. For them Guhyakali is the embodiment of that branch of Kaulism. Linked with her in this role is the white Goddess Siddhalakshmi (always written Siddhi-Lakshmi in Nepal) one of the apotropaic deities (Pratyangira) of the *Jayadrathayamalatantra* and the patron goddess of the Malla kings (1200-1768) and their descendants" (Sanderson, "Shaivism and the Tantric Traditions" 684). During the full moon of the month of Magha (January-February), the Manandhars of the southern part of Kathmandu, along with the *Juju*, perform their puja to the *divali* (ancestors) inside the Machali temple. There is no doubt a close relationship between Machali and Pachali Bhairava, for the puja *paddhati* (manual) used by the Karmacharya is entitled the "Machali Pachali Yajna Vidhi." This communal worship of Pachali/Ajima/Machali-Siddhilakshmi would be an exoteric cult, as opposed to the esoteric Tantric cult of Svacchanda Bhairava/Aghoreshvari (Sanderson, oral communication, Apr. 1990, at Harvard University).[13]

The evening of the fourth day, the jar is brought from the painters' house to that of the *Juju*, who is said to have "stolen" the jar. Having performed a ritual of welcome upon its arrival, the *Juju* later leaves his home accompanied by the Karmacharya and an assistant who carries a big red umbrella, a royal attribute of the *Juju*. This group heads towards the Atko Narayana temple, the most important temple of Narayana in the southern part of Kathmandu, standing to the south of the Kashthamandapa. At the precise moment when the Indra pole is erected at Hanuman Dhoka, the *Juju* used to have a pole raised inside the precincts of Atko Narayana, the same that would later be raised at the entrance to the Pachali Bhairava *pitha*. It is also said that Atko Narayana is the son of Pachali Bhairava. The real priest of this temple, Narayana Gopala Rajopadhyaya, does not play any role and does not participate in the regular worship of Pachali Bhairava. Narayana is, after all, the pure and Brahmanical form of Vishnu.

After the Karmacharya has performed a simple ritual before the closed temple gate (pic. 5, see p. 173), two porters bring a huge brass vessel called a *kasi* (pic. 6, see p. 173), which belongs to the *Juju*. The *kasi* is "a small earthen pot

[13] "It is certain that the Kashmiri and the Newars of the Kathmandu Valley looked out on much the same distribution and interrelation of Shaiva Tantric cults at this time, and it is highly probable that each community inherited these traditions independently by participating in a more wide-spread system, which may have included even the Tamil-speaking regions of the far south of the subcontinent" (Sanderson, "Shaivism and the Tantric Traditions" 663).

used for storing grain or various kinds of food" (Manandhar 27). The Karmacharya draws a diagram, on top of which he places the *kasi* and performs a ritual while the Kasai play some music. The two porters then carry the *kasi* towards the Kashthamandapa, where they must circumambulate the Bhuteshvara three times. This "Master of Ghosts" is a stone in front of the Kashthamandapa, which is considered to be a manifestation of Pachali Bhairava (cf. Manandhar 45). They must also go on to circumambulate the Sweto Bhairava stone in Brahma *tol* while the *Juju* pauses for them to rejoin him at a specific spot on his way to the *pitha* of Pachali Bhairava. It is here that the clay jar of Pachali Bhairava was broken, which prompted the king Shivasimha Malla to have it remade in bronze.

> But the actual festival starts on the fifth, with the ritual of Ka(n)-Joshi-Bwake-gu, in which a copper vessel, Kasi, large enough to accommodate four persons, is worshipped by an Achaju priest. In the former days there was a strange custom of selecting a Joshi who was one-eyed. The Joshi was carried in the copper vessel to a place known as Bhutisa, near the Gorakhnatha temple, in the heart of the city. Bhutisa means the dwelling place of ghosts and spirits. From Bhutisa, the one-eyed Joshi was carried to the temple of Pacali Bhairava at the southern end of Katmandu town ... Nowadays only the copper-pot is worshipped during which streams of water are kept flowing into it from four clay vessels called Ampah. (Nepali 347-48)[14]

When the *Juju* arrives at the *pitha*, the jar of Pachali Bhairava has already been put upon its *phalca* (platform) under the shelter. While the *Juju* was performing the ritual to Atko Narayana and the *kasi* puja, the Jyapus remaining in his house had "stolen" back the jar. On the *phalca* there is therefore the Pachali Bhairava jar and, on the left (if you face the jar), the *patra khola* (small silver dish) that represents Ajima. Following on the heels of the *Juju*, the porters throw the *kasi* brusquely on the Vetala in human form.

Lava Ram Karmacharya, the Tantric priest has fasted and shaved his hair in order to participate in the festival. He belongs to the high-ranking Chathariya sub-division of the Sreshtha caste that had ancient royal or governmental

[14] Nutan Sharma (see n8), when he visited us in Paris in July 2003, suggested that Nepali's statement about the "one-eyed Joshi" would be based on a misunderstanding of the Newari terms used to describe the *kasi* puja. The term would actually be *kam jasi bva-kegu* meaning the "running of an empty (*kam*) vessel" (*jasi*, not *josi*!), which certainly corresponds to the situation these days. However, it seems clear, from all the other (not just circumstantial) details surrounding the *kasi*, that what is being enacted here is the (at least symbolic) human sacrifice that was the moving principle of the Vedic sacrificial schema and had been retained (and often actualised) in its Tantric elaborations (see n23 below). The (willing?) immersion of a one-eyed brahmin astrologer in the *kasi* might seem (not just ridiculous but) implausible, but so was the choice of a horribly deformed brahmin from the Atreya clan to take on the sins of the king in the Vedic *Ashvamedha* (see n23). Similarly, it is inconceivable as to how such a complex array of deformities could have been found (as prescribed) in a single person, let alone their being combined with a talent for acting, in the (admittedly ridiculous) brahmin clown of the Sanskrit theatre. Clearly, what preoccupied the ritualists (even when disguised as dramaturges!) – semioticians *avant la lettre* – was not so much the physical presence or absence of the human victim but the symbolic notations invested in the actors and objects of the sacrificial scenarios. In this regard, it seems perfectly plausible that the term *kam jasi/josi bva-kegu* embodies a deliberate ambiguity. In the tenth Act of the Sanskrit play, *Mricchakatika* (The Little Clay-Cart), for example, though the brahmin hero finally escapes execution in the nick of time, all the accompanying notations suggest that he (and the "evil" king!) had been put to (a symbolic) death. This "studied equivocation" is immediately repeated when the hero insists that the real villain, whom the crowd wants to substitute in his place, be *muchyate* (freed), which is precisely the Sanskrit term used by the ritualists to describe the fate of the animal when it is "liberated" (i.e., sacrificed).

functions. His duties belonged previously to the Joshi, a fact that seems to be confirmed by the role of the one-eyed Joshi in the *kasi* puja. The Joshis, also of Chathariya caste, are astrologers. They are composed of a combination of brahmin and farmer (Vaishya) elements, and they consider themselves to be "fallen brahmins" (Nepali 156-57). There are no more Joshis in Kathmandu to officiate at the annual festival, and that is why the *Juju* resorts to the services of the Karmacharya (pic. 5, see p. 173).

After the arrival of the Sthapita, his assistant from the Buddhist merchant caste of Tuladhars, and then of the band of Malakar musicians led by Lakshmi Narayan, the Karmacharya, seated in front of the altar, begins a ritual with the Sthapita on his right and the *Juju* on his left. The Sthapita washes all the divinities around the altar three times, using a different pot each time, and the third time he puts a *tasi* (lemon) into the pot.[15] The Malakars continuously play a musical routine consecrated to Bhairava. Thereafter, the jar is brought from the platform to the altar along with the small bowl representing Ajima, which is carried by the *Thakali* of the temple guardians. The Vetala is covered, except for the head, with *kanasva* flowers (pic. 1, see p. 172). A specific repertory of songs is sung in honour of Pachali Bhairava. It is at this moment that the change of guardians takes place: those who have tended the *pitha* (open-air temple) throughout the year, now take charge of the Pachali Bhairava jar, again for a full year, while other guardians assume responsibility for the open-air temple. It is the Sthapita who must ritually put the jar on the altar. Nepali (348) has already noted that Pachali Bhairava must await the arrival of the Ka(n)-Joshi-Bwake-gu procession before being installed on the altar.

After the ritual without the Pachali Bhairava jar on the altar of the *pitha*, the Karmacharya, in the presence of the *Juju* and the Sthapita, now performs a ritual with the jar on the altar. At the end of this second ritual, the new guardians of the *pitha* put some wood in the sacrificial area for the *homa* (fire-offering). Before this, the Sthapita must fill the jar with beer and a mixture of rice and meat (Newari: *samay*). According to Slusser (*Nepal Mandala* 238), the contents from the previous year have been emptied at Panchanadi (literally "five rivers"), one of the nine auspicious places on the Bagmati river where pilgrims come to bathe during Dasain. The Pachali Bhairava jar is then sealed by the Sthapita. All kinds of virtues are attributed to this ambrosial mixture.

It is the early hours of the morning now, and there is a huge crowd. The Sthapita lights the *homa* fire. Ganesha Purna Bahadur or Kasai, who that night incarnates Ganesha, son of Pachali Bhairava and Ajima, starts to sacrifice the goats. He must sacrifice them in his arms while the music is now played by the Kasai (Nepali 245). With the animal in his arms, he first cuts its jugular vein and then cuts off its head. This is given to the Sthapita, who puts it onto a rice-filled tray beside the Karmacharya. Two goats are sacrificed, and there are therefore two heads put beside the

[15] As in the *nimantrana* puja. During the Bisket Yatra in Bhaktapur, for example, the leaves of this fruit are attached to the summit of the *linga* (pole) that represents Bhairava. For the sacrificial equivalence of the lemon and semen in the Tamil "folk-cult" of the Kattavarayan, see Visuvalingam, "The Transgressive Sacrality of the *Dikshita*" 441.

Karmacharya. But according the devotees of Pachali Bhairava – who cannot explain it to me – there will, in fact, be three heads of sacrificial victims. These heads are the last to be thrown into the fire. As the butcher carves the victims, the Sthapita throws the pieces of the sacrificial victims into the fire (pic. 7, see p. 174). Hence this *homa* is called *Mamsahuti* (offering of meat). The *Juju* throws only some grains of rice. While meditating on the instruments of the *homa*, the Karmacharya finishes it and puts a *tika* made of soot from the sacrificial spoon onto the foreheads of the *Juju*, the *Juju's* son, the Sthapita, and the anthropologist! The ashes of the *homa* are thrown in the Bagmati river. At the same time, some blood sacrifices are performed on the Vetala by the new guardians. The *Juju* then gives a *dakshina* (honorarium) to the Karmacharya. The Sthapita gives some rice pancakes to the *Juju* and the Karmacharya. According to Ganesha Purna Bahadur, the *homa* fire is "stolen" by the Jyapu to be brought to the temple of Sikali at Khokana near Patan. According to Anderson (160), it was a buffalo whose blood was once shed on the jar, on the sacrificial area, and all around the altar, as an offering to Pachali Bhairava. The detached head was offered to Agni, the Vedic god of Fire, and the other pieces were thrown into the fire, one by one, on behalf of the other gods.

While the Indian Ganesha has remained an auspicious and Brahmanical divinity, the Newar Ganesha regularly and publicly receives blood sacrifices during the course of their festivals. All the same, the fact that Ganesha is incarnated by a Kasai finds some justification in Hindu mythology where the birth of the elephant-trunked god is generally considered to be marked by impurity. As revealed in their origin myth, it is the impurity of the Kasai – the result of his profession of bloodletting – that gives him the right to kill the sacrificial victim (Nepali 175-77). The Kasai, who were known previously under the name of Khadgi (sword-bearers), claim to be descendants of the Shahi Thakuri, the clan to which the current royal family of Nepal belongs. The Kasai formerly performed sacrifices during the twelve-yearly festival, but they no longer do so now. Ganesha's *dyahche*, as opposed to that of Pachali Bhairava, does not change each year but remains on the same site in the Hyumat district, where these members of the impure butcher caste live.

The *Pancha-kom* (fifth day), which is the day of the change of family among the *dyah-palah* (guardians), is also the occasion for the initiation of the Jyapu children into the adult life in their community. On the morning of the fifth day, the Jyapu bring their children, above all, their sons, into the *pitha* to perform the same tonsure-ceremony that was described above for the children of the Manandhars, who for their part stopped performing it some ten years ago. The Jyapu make various offerings to Pachali Bhairava, asking protection for their children. The Jyapu guardians of Bhairava sacrifice, on the Vetala, the poultry offered by the devotees, while the Kasai continue to sacrifice goats all day long.

On the night of the fifth day, a huge crowd is assembled in the *pitha* when the Gorkha infantry arrives escorting the sword of the king, normally kept in the Malla palace at Hanuman Dhoka (pic. 8, see p. 174).

Then comes the group of Malakar musicians directed by Lakshmi Narayan

Malakar. Finally, the Kasai musicians arrive accompanying Ganesha, the son of Pachali Bhairava and Nay Ajima (Newari: Nay = Nepali: *Kasai*), incarnated by Ganesha Purna Bahadur. Ganesha is also called by the name of Nay Ajima, the concubine of Pachali Bhairava. Ajima is the general word, in Newari, to indicate the feminine aspect of the divinity. The Kasai procession stops before going inside the *pitha* and waits for the astrologically auspicious moment for the meeting of father and son. When the moment arrives, the Malakar musicians come to welcome the Kasai and accompany Ganesha to his father. The ritual manifestation of jealousy between the *patra khola* (true) Ajima, dressed in black,[16] and Nay Ajima, dressed in white, is expressed by altercations between the Jyapu and the Kasai, followed by the inevitable reconciliation. The Pachali Bhairava jar is violently shaken when the small statue of Ganesha takes his place beside it, a sign that Ganesha (or Nay Ajima) has finally arrived. Purna Bahadur takes his place on the altar near Bhairava, and sits next to the stone representing Ganesha.

After some time the sword of the king is put on the altar, and the *Thakali* of the Jyapu receives a *tika* from the representative of the king, as do all the other members of the *guthi*. Ajima, with half-closed eyes and evidently in a trance state, is then carried to the altar from a nearby building (pic. 9, see p. 175). The Jyapu, who the day before had taken on the year-long charge of the *pitha*, put a mixture of rice and meat (Newari: *samay*) under the armpits of Ajima and Ganesha, who also enter at this time into a trance. It is repeated that Ajima is not the real mother of Ganesha, but only his stepmother. Ajima is impersonated by the sister's son (Newari: *bhincha*), that is to say the nephew, of the *Thakali* (eldest male member) of the Pachali Bhairava *guthi*. If there is no nephew, the role is assumed by the husband of the *Thakali's* daughter. He must fast the whole day from the morning of the fifth, so that he can enter into a trance. His body is completely shaven, his fingernails are cut, and he takes a bath to purify himself. He must hold firmly to his chest the *patra khola*, that seems to be symbolically assimilated to a *kapala* (skull), and thus becomes possessed by the goddess Kali.

The procession – led by the Gorkha infantry and followed by the representative of the king carrying the sword, by Ganesha, by Ajima carrying the *patra khola* and, finally, by the jar of Pachali Bhairava carried by the Jyapu – moves off towards Hanuman Dhoka. It is the group of Malakars who are at the very end of this procession. They never stop playing, as their music is a part of the ritual and essential to Pachali Bhairava. The path of the procession is the one shown in map 2 (see p. 171). During the procession, the Manandhar and the Jyapu of the southern part of Kathmandu station before their houses statues of Bhairava doing a ritual, *hathu-haye-gu*, to make rice-beer flow from Bhairava's mouth. Those who catch the small fish

[16] Contrary to what Anderson writes: "Ajima dressed completely in white ..." (162). As opposed to Anderson, who speaks only of Ganesha, Nepali (349) speaks only of Nay Ajima. Slusser (*Nepal Mandala* 239), for her part, confuses the two Ajimas for a single one, whom she connects with the Kasai woman of the myth. This confusion, first between Nay Ajima and Ganesha, and then between the two Ajimas, is perfectly understandable, given the fluidity of their symbolic identities at the mythico-ritual level.

previously placed in the beer are considered particularly blessed by the god (Nepali 368; Anderson 135). The Jyapu, the Kasai and the Manandhar drink enormous draughts of alcohol throughout the festival. The participants are naturally very drunk and aggressive.

The procession arrives at Hanuman Dhoka, where the ancient Malla palace is located (pic. 13, see p. 176). A crowd has already gathered before the statue of the monkey-god Hanuman. We note the discreet arrival of the Kumari or Virgin-Goddess, draped as always in red, the incarnation of the tutelary divinity of the ancient Malla kings (Allen; Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 474). Ajima and Ganesha pause for a long moment before the closed doors of the palace until a very young buffalo is offered on behalf of the king. The guards of the palace throw it very brutally through the door of the palace which they shut immediately thereafter. The buffalo is straightaway sacrificed by the Kasai, and the blood is made to spout over Ajima. A violent quarrel erupts between the Kasai and the Jyapu over the carcass of the animal. The Jyapus exultantly seize it, succeed in keeping the head, and drag away the buffalo in great haste, leaving a trail of blood along the street up to their new *dyahche*.

The Jyapus exploit this occasion to settle old scores with their enemies with impunity. Those Jyapus who are still carrying the jar of Pachali Bhairava, stop for a moment in front of the Kumari and venerate her (pic. 10, see p. 175). Then the Kumari, the "daughter" of Bhairava, goes back to her nearby house. The heavy jar of Pachali Bhairava is slowly carried back towards his new *dyahche* in Jaisideval, where the eldest male member of the Jyapu family charged with the closed sanctuary for this year performs the welcoming ritual upon receiving the jar and the *patra khola*. This family must give some wine to the Malakar and rice to the Sthapita, four days after the festival.

5. Khadgasiddhi or the Twelve-yearly Empowerment of the Royal Sword and the Nava Durga Dances

The last twelve-year festival took place on 2 October 1987 (Ashvina 16, Vikram Samvat 2044). The most important event takes place during Dasain in the night of Navami to Vijayadashami of the month of Ashvina (September-October) during the waxing fortnight, four days after the annual festival. The Hindu king exchanges his sword with a Malakar who incarnates Bhairava. This ritual *khadgasiddhi* (empowerment of the sword) is officiated by a Buddhist priest, Badri Ratna Vajracharya. The Malakars of Kathmandu, who are all Buddhists unlike their counterparts in Bhaktapur, play the principal role in this Hindu festival. These Buddhist gardeners live at the foot of Svayambhunatha Stupa. They claim an equality of caste with the Hindu Jyapu, a status denied to them by the latter (Nepali 169). Slusser (*Nepal Mandala* 348) even suggests that, originally, the Malakar dances also may have been annual events. The government must give quite a lot of money – one lakh (i.e., a hundred thousand) rupees in 1987 – to the Malakars who have to suspend their normal work for nine months. The Malakars dance as much for Bhadrakali, their lineage deity (Nepali: *kuladevata*), as for Pachali Bhairava. Bhadrakali's most recent empowerment of the king's

sword took place on 18 October 1991.[17] (The dancer representing) Bhadrakali is dressed in blue – like Bhairava – during her own *khadgasiddhi* but in his/her usual red during that of Pachali Bhairava (pic. 14, see p. 176).

It is interesting to note that the ritual calendar is the same for the Hindu gardeners who likewise incarnate the Nava Durga at Bhaktapur (cf. Gutschow and Basukala 140-52). Everything begins with the festival of Ghantakarna on the fourteenth day of the waning fortnight of the month of Shravana (July-August). On this day, the Malakar go to the royal palace and present the king with some coins and betel before proceeding to the *dyahche* of Pachali Bhairava. The guru of the dancers, Lakshmi Narayana Malakar, performs a ritual with the members of their *guthi* and the dancers. There are altogether thirteen dancers: Bhairava (always in blue), Simhini, Vyaghrini, Ganesha, Kumar, Chamunda (Ajima), Varahi, Indrayani, Vaishnavi, Kaumari, Mahalakshmi, Brahmayani and Rudrayani. This troop is referred to in Newari by the general term *gathu* (gardener) *pyakha* (dance). The dancer who incarnates Bhairava will become the guru of the dancers at the next twelve-year festival. After Ghantakarna, there is a two-hour daily instruction in the dances at the *dyahche* where rituals are performed on Saturdays and on the fourteenth day of each fortnight. Ghantakarna is the demon whose grotesque effigies are used to expel evil from all the quarters of Newar towns (Nepali 377-79; Anderson 72-76; Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 518). His is also one of three festivals when the Pachali Bhairava jar is cleaned inside his *dyahche* (supra 128). At the Asan *tol* crossroads, it is the mask of Akasha Bhairava, which temporarily plays this scapegoat role before going back to its temple. The symbolic role of "scapegoat," so closely associated with the divine king, seems to be inscribed into the very calendar of the *khadgasiddhi*.

During the Navami (ninth day) of the waxing fortnight of the month of Ashvina, the Malakars sacrifice a buffalo to Pachali Bhairava in the *dyahche*. Then the dancers go to the *pitha* to perform a ritual on the altar. They are accompanied by the *pancha-kanya* (five virgins) who are, in fact, the wives of the guru of the dancers, of Bhairava, of Kaumari, and of the two musicians. The role of the *pancha-kanya* seems to correspond to that of the royal Kumari in the annual festival, and the importance of a mystic "virginity" explains the inclusion of the wife of the dancer who incarnates Kaumari. There is, in fact, in the Newar pantheon another goddess called Panchakaumari (Five Virgins) – often identified with Balakaumari (Child-Virgin) – who is represented by five stones and who seems to be very much connected, conceptually, with Pachali Bhairava (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 334-37). Tika Bhairava in the south of the Valley, for instance, has Bala and Jaya-Kaumari as wives. The numeric base of five is

[17] I was unable to witness the Pachali Bhairava *khadgasiddhi* in 1987. As for that of Bhadrakali in October 1991, G. Toffin refused to fund a requested research-mission to Kathmandu and told me on his visit to Harvard, where I was researching at the time, that he was planning to study the festival himself (see n32). However, our Newar friend, Nabina Rajbandari, who was in Kathmandu at the time, kindly offered to attend and take some photos for us. The principal participants were also very forthcoming regarding the details of the festival.

fundamental to the conception and the worship of Pachali Bhairava. Kumara-Karttikeya, whose *shakti* (feminine power) is incarnated by (the different forms of) Kaumari, is the god of war par excellence, which accords well with the martial significance of the festival of Vijayadashami for the Hindu king.

At twilight, the Malakars visit the painters of Bhimsen *tol* to receive their masks. Prem Chitrakar began the fabrication of the masks nine months before the ritual exchange of swords and at a time that had been astrologically calculated. The painters of the Bhimsen district made these masks from some earth collected near the *dyahche* of Pachali Bhairava and brought to them by the Malakars, who also pay for the same. The dancers then return to the open *pitha* and place their masks on the altar.

The Malla kings had two appointed priests, a Hindu *Purohita* and a Buddhist Vajracharya. Tales are still told today of the legendary exploits of Lambakarna Bhatta and Jamana Guvaju, the two Tantric priests in the entourage of Pratapamalla (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 74, 290, 292, 359). Badri Ratna Vajracharya is responsible not only for the *khadgasiddhi* of Pachali Bhairava but also for the *khadgasiddhi* of Bhadrakali. The latter also takes place every twelve years during the early hours of Vijayadashami (pic. 14, see p. 176), but at the *Simha-dvara*, the lion-door near Indra Chowk, one of the eighteen gates that had surrounded the ancient Kantipura which is now Kathmandu. The *khadgasiddhi* of Pachali Bhairava is more recent than that of Bhadrakali, and this primacy of the Shakti or feminine aspect is also attested in the Bisket Yatra at Bhaktapur: it is only after his decapitation that (Kala) Bhairava (Kashi Vishvanatha), drawn by curiosity from Benaras, would have been integrated into a festival originally consecrated to Bhadrakali alone. The hereditary charge of performing the ritual exchange of swords is reserved for Badri Ratna's family alone, as it was their ancestor who would have brought Bhadrakali from Assam to Kathmandu. The Buddhist priests would have chosen the Malakars as dancers because they are easily possessed by the divinities. Badri Ratna Vajracharya is the official priest of the Malakars of Kathmandu. He performs all the life-cycle and other rituals of these avowedly Buddhist gardeners.

Late in the night Badri Ratna Vajracharya arrives to consecrate the masks, and then proceeds to purify the dancers. Then he, this Buddhist priest, performs a *homa* in the sacrificial area of the *pitha*. After this *homa*, he puts a *purna-kalasha* (vase of plenty) in the sacrificial area and another pot called *nasa-kalasha* in front of the altar. The *nasa-kalasha* represents "Nasa Dya"or (Shiva) Nataraja, the god of dance (Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 488). The spirit of the divinities must first enter the *purna-kalasha*. Then Badri Ratna Vajracharya must "stabilise" Pachali Bhairava in the sword of the Bhairava dancer as follows. Holding in his right hand a *vajra*, he grasps in his left hand a cord that ties the *purna-kalasha* to the sword, which has been placed on the altar. He invites Pachali Bhairava into the sword using various mantra (sacred formulae). The dancers then put on their robes and go up to the altar. The Bhairava dancer seizes the sword and the entire troupe goes directly to the Kashthamandapa, where the *khadgasiddhi* takes place. It is already the "tenth (day of the waxing fortnight consecrated to the Goddess),

the day of Victory" or Vijayadashami, which is the culminating day of the Dasain celebrations (Toffin, "Culte des déesses et fête du Dasai chez les Néwar [Népal]" 55-81).

The exchange of swords takes place during the early hours of the Vijayadashami in front of the Kashthamandapa, precisely at Bhuteshvara. The King's sword or *mula-khadga*, usually kept in the Malla palace at Hanuman Dhoka, is brought by Tej Ratna Tamrakar, the head of the palace's administrative affairs or *Hakkim*, to the Kashthamandapa. The *Hakkim* takes his place behind the chief priest (Sanskrit: *mulacharya*) of the Taleju temple, but in front of other *guthis* carrying their own swords. Upon the arrival of the king (accompanied by the queen in 1988), the Malakars begin to dance and the royal sword is handed over to the king. Badri Ratna Vajracharya intervenes at this point and orders the Bhairava dancer to stand up on the Bhuteshvara stone (pic. 11, see p. 175). Having exchanged his own sword for that of the king, Bhairava dances at the four corners of Kashthamandapa, all the while brandishing the royal sword and making it understood through his gestures that he is conferring upon it a very special power. This exchange of swords between the king and the Bhairava dancer standing on Bhuteshvara is repeated three times to the accompaniment of very potent music played by the Malakars. The Nepali king and his kingdom are thereafter under a very special protection. The *khadgasiddhi* is in many ways reminiscent of a similar ceremony during the ancient Vedic sacrifice of *Rajasuya* (engendering a king) (Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* 133; cf. Toffin, *Les aspects religieux de la royauté néwar au Népal* 62n13).

Even if the cult of Pachali Bhairava, strictly speaking, involves only the inhabitants of the southern part of Kathmandu, where his *dyahche* is located (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 91), all Nepalis consider themselves in some way to be the devotees of Pachali Bhairava. The current king of the Shah Dynasty participates in the *khadgasiddhi* – as an integral part of the Hindu festival of Dasain – just as he participates in other Newar royal festivals, above all the Indra Yatra. He is merely carrying on with a religious policy adopted from the beginning by his ancestor Prithvi Narayana Shah. This unifier and founder of modern Nepal captured Kathmandu in 1768 during the Indra Yatra just as the Kumari was about to give the legitimising *tika* to the last Malla king. Instead it was Prithvi Narayana who received it amidst popular applause (Toffin, *Les aspects religieux de la royauté néwar au Népal* 61). The Shah king and his Indo-Nepalese brahmin counsellors seem to have very well understood the ritual meaning of the Newar festivals, despite the "strangeness" of these festivals with regard to the norms of classical Hinduism. Even before his conquest of the Valley, Prithvi Narayana had been a devotee of the Newar Bhairavi of Nuwakot – to the northwest of Kathmandu – whence he had launched his attacks against the Mallas. The Dhami of Nuwakot, a Jyapu of the Dangol sub-caste, still wears royal insignia given by the Shah king of Kathmandu, and enters into a trance each year in order to incarnate Bhairava and renew the whole kingdom (Chalier-Visuvalingam, *Étude préliminaire du culte de Bhairava dans la Vallée de Katmandou*; and *Étude des fêtes* 44-65; Chalier-Visuvalingam and

Visuvalingam, "Bhairava and the Goddess" 285-94).

The dances of the twelve-year festival continue for nine months, and end during the month of Ashadha (June-July) on the eighth day of the waning fortnight or *krishnashtami*, more exactly, during the night called *bhalabhalashtami*. In this way, the Malakars dance, among other places, in the inner courtyard of the southern *Juju's* house, in front of the northern *Juju's* house (in the quarter called Asan) and above all in Nasa Cok inside the Malla palace at Hanuman Dhoka (pic. 12, see p. 175). The dancers must dance thirty-three times in all, of which ten take place outside Kathmandu, including at Patan and at Bhaktapur. The Malakars can also be invited to dance in individual homes.

The second to last dance is a very particular and comic one, the dance of Sweto Bhairava, in which the well-known theme of *nyalakegu* (Newari), "catching fish," recurs (Levy 127-29). During the Nava Durga dances of Bhaktapur, for example, this *Sweto* (white) faced Bhairava "must try to empty out a basket of fishes over the heads of the spectators. Such an act is a very bad omen, and so the people scatter in front of Bhairava, all the while taunting him" (Toffin, "Culte des déesses et fête du Dasai chez les Néwar [Népal]" 66). But behind this "semblance of humour" lies the symbolism of human sacrifice in which Sweto Bhairava has the role both of victim and of sacrificer. The dance takes place in Brahma *tol* where there is a stone corresponding to the representation of Sweto Bhairava inside the *pitha* of Pachali Bhairava. It may be recalled that during the annual festival the *kasi* must make a detour in order to circumambulate this stone before rejoining the *Juju* at the place where the clay jar representing Pachali Bhairava had been broken (Toffin, "Culte des déesses et fête du Dasai chez les Néwar [Népal]" 33). The procession to the royal palace also circumambulates the stone, which had been established by a Rajopadhyaya from Bhaktapur who is also the patron of this dance. Pachali Bhairava, the meat-eating god, becomes Sweto Bhairava in the house of the brahmin, accepting only vegetarian offerings. No blood sacrifice is allowed. The Rajopadhyaya, however, does make some meat offerings to the other dancers. We recognise here very clearly the Brahmanical pole of the cult of Pachali Bhairava, the pure pole that forbids blood sacrifices even on the altar of his *pitha*.

The last dance, which takes place in the Jaisideval quarter in the Bhusa Nani Baha, is a puja representing the death of the divinities. Bhairava, Ajima (Bhadrakali) and Varahi are arranged to form a triangle around some *sija*, rice offered to the dead. The importance accorded to (Vajra) Varahi in this last dance is probably connected to the fact that she is the consort, among others, of Chakrasamvara, the Vajrayana Buddhist equivalent of Bhairava. While the Malakar play music, the dancers throw *sija* into the triangle three times. On the second throwing, all the divinities die except these three, who will wait to die at the last casting of rice. The Malakars, holding their masks in their hands, circumambulate a *hiti* (fountain) near the Kashthamandapa, and then head towards the *pitha* of Pachali Bhairava. Showing signs of great weakness, the dancers place their masks on the altar. Lakshmi Narayan Malakar starts a puja during which he puts meat offerings onto the altar and gives drinks to the dancers. The drinks revive them, so that they are able to participate in the puja. Finally they

proceed to the cremation ground of Tekudoban. While the Malakar play music for the dead or *si baja*, the Bhairava dancer burns the masks. The ashes are not conserved to make new masks, as in Bhaktapur, but are thrown into the Bagmati river. There is no period of impurity after this incineration: the dancers must only wash their faces and hands before taking wine and *samay* (a mixture of meat) inside the *pitha*. The dresses are torn into many pieces, which become precious relics for the devotees of Bhairava. After four days, they must perform a last puja on the altar, to which all the members of the *guthi* of Pachali Bhairava are invited. These dances merit an entire study by themselves, but it is already evident that death – real or symbolic – is at the centre of the cult of (Pachali) Bhairava.[18]

6. Socio-Political Levels in the Sacrificial Schema

The annual festival of Pachali Bhairava is based on the Hindu sacrificial schema, where there reappears the ancient theme of the theft of the Fire and *Soma* (ambrosia), represented in the present case by the jar of beer. The three roles of Vedic sacrifice remain: the patron of the ceremony, the divinities and the officiants.[19] It is possible to distinguish three socio-political levels that correspond to the daily ritual, the annual festival and the twelve-year festival. At the daily level, Pachali Bhairava is a lineage deity belonging particularly to the Jyapu of southern Kathmandu while also playing an important role for the Kasai, Manandhar, etc. The *Juju* does no more than offer a puja tray every Saturday, and the current Nepali king does not participate at this level at all. In the twelve-year festival, Bhairava reveals himself to be a royal divinity, and it is a Buddhist Vajracharya who supervises the exchange of swords. By dancing in front of the house of the northern *Juju* and elsewhere in the Valley, the Malakars extend the symbolic power of the king far beyond the southern part of Kathmandu. The Rajopadhyaya, who is the patron of the dance of Sweto Bhairava at Brahma *tol*, comes from Bhaktapur. Although centred in Kathmandu, the symbolic kingship of Pachali Bhairava seems to extend even beyond Patan to the whole Valley and, now, embraces the modern state of Nepal. The Jyapu have no role in this festival. In their annual festival, however, the Kasai, the Sthapita, and the Chitrakar all take part; the Malakar continue to play an important role and

[18] Thus, commenting, in his Introduction, on Toffin's contribution on the (regeneration every twelve years of the) Nava Durga cult at the village of Theco, Axel Michaels observes that some of the dancers "have to swing their heads continuously, for anyone who looks into their eyes for too long would have to die immediately. It is believed that during the festival one person a year dies in the village or its neighborhood. The goddesses are thought to have 'eaten' the unfortunate person" (29). In fact, the displacements and operations to which the *kasi* is subjected (see n14) clearly suggest that it is the (substitute for the) king-divinity (see n1, again, for Toffin's earlier objections), who is being sacrificed (and symbolically consumed) during the annual Pachali Bhairava festival.

[19] For the Hindu sacrificial schema, cf. Biardeau and Malamoud; and, in the Newar context, cf. Toffin, "Analyse structurale d'une fête communale Néwar." Malamoud had objected to my derivation/assimilation – during my thesis-defense – of the Newar poles (including the *linga*) as the place of blood-sacrifice from/to the Vedic *yupa*, because the victim was not immolated at the stake in the classical brahmanical sacrifice. Not only have we (Chalier-Visuvalingam and Visuvalingam, "Bhairava and the Goddess" 256n2) responded to this objection, but Malamoud himself demonstrates now in his latest book (*Le jumeau solaire*) how human sacrifices in the (even contemporary) Tantric and folk context have their pedigree and theoretical model in the Vedic sacrificial thought.

the ritual sword of the ancient Mallas is brought to consecrate the *pitha* of Pachali Bhairava with the seal of kingship.

What seems problematic is this intermediate level, which is also the richest, in which the *Juju* – acting as "sub-king" – is seconded by the Sthapita. To the minor role of the *Juju* during the *khadgasiddhi* corresponds the Sthapita's role of "co-patron" in the annual festival. Having received his charge from the Mallas, he probably represents the king at the *Juju's* side during the annual festival. The Sthapita must be present at the twelve-year festival, and it is perhaps the direct participation of the king – be he Malla or Shah – in the *khadgasiddhi* that reduces his role to that of mere witness. By centralising the politics of the kingdom, the Malla apparently sought to integrate the ancient dualist structure through an adaptation of its ritual basis. That is why the patron of the annual festival is not only the southern *Juju*, but also the real king, represented by his sword and above all through the person of the Sthapita.

But the annual festival is also, and above all, the occasion for the transfer of (the *dyahche* and *pitha* of) Pachali Bhairava to a new Jyapu family. We see a rotation among the *Thakali* (elders) of the twelve families that constitute this particular clan of farmers. The fact that Bhairava is often referred to as "Aju Dya" (ancestor or grandfather) among the Newar, supports the conclusion that this Hindu god has served in the assimilation of lineage divinities deriving from the tribal "infra-structure" (or rather, origins) of Newar society (cf. Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 589-90). Even the north-south partition of Kathmandu (and of Bhaktapur and other Newar villages) corresponds well to the dualist organisation characteristic of tribal societies. The institution of the "double-kingdom" already in Licchavi times, and its legitimisation by the *Arthashastra*, suggest that this "political" process of Hinduisation, which would have commenced from the very beginnings of Nepalese history, was, in the past, important in India as well. The imposing figure of Bhimsen-Bhairava flanked by Arjuna seems to reflect the transformation of a tribal leader into an exemplary Hindu king. The maternal uncle/uterine nephew relationship between the *Thakali* and the person representing Ajima finds its parallel in the relationship between the two kings. It would seem therefore that, like the *Juju* and the Sthapita, the *Thakali* also represents the sacrificer.

Though "co-opted" by the Hindu sacrificial system, the Jyapu who incarnates Ajima still maintains the state of possession that is so important in the Tantric worship of Kali and of Bhairava. This function of trance is institutionalised at the properly royal level in the person of the Malakar who incarnates Pachali Bhairava. The choice of the Malakar to incarnate the impure god seems to be dictated by two conflicting requirements. The three castes responsible for the annual festival of Pharping – the Kusle, the Kasai and especially the Pore, among whom the mask of Pachali Bhairava circulates – are all untouchables. In principle, the "possessed" should belong to the lowest castes of untouchables. But this would prevent the exercise of his public functions, which put him in physical contact not only with the king – to whom he gives the *tika* – and the *Juju*, but also with the totality of the other

higher castes, including the Rajopadhyaya. The task of representing the Nava Durga at Bhaktapur was given to the Malakars only after the divinities shredded a pig into pieces in order to prevent their Tantric master, a Rajopadhyaya brahmin, from catching them (Levy 110). The choice of a marginally pure caste to incarnate Bhairava is thus the result of a compromise between the requirement of impurity – the source of power – and the requirements of the public context that does not allow the explicit valorisation of the impurity. In the final analysis, the Bhairava-Malakar represents nothing less than the hidden transgressive dimension of the Hindu king himself.

The Buddhist Malakars, who claim to equal the Hindu Jyapus, seem to represent the latter in some way at the royal level. The Jyapus may also have been Buddhist until fairly recently. This would be confirmed by the role still played by the Sakyas, Chitrakars and the Vajracharyas even at the level of daily worship. In spite of the Shaiva (re)assimilation of Vajrayana Tantrism during the Malla period, two-thirds of the Newar population remained Buddhist even into the ninteenth century (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 286-93). The process of Hinduisation is particularly visible among the Manandhar, who are still Buddhists (supra 129). This would explain the choice of the Buddhist Sthapita to represent the Hindu Malla king among his Jyapu subjects. The Hindu nucleus of the Pachali Bhairava cult is found rather at the intermediary level around the *Juju* and (his relations with) the Kasai. The well-known "conservatism" of the Jyapu would consist rather of their having maintained, first under a Buddhist and then under a Hindu facade, the tribal infrastructure of their socio-ritual organisation. What matters is that this "Buddhist" cult of Svacchanda (Lalita) Bhairava has remained deeply Vedic in its sacrificial structure and already profoundly Hinduised in its contents. It is on this basis that the Malla and the Shah Kings – always directed by a Vajracharya – have been able to play the role of the royal patron in the cult of Pachali Bhairava.

The choice of a Buddhist priest to officiate at the essentially Hindu worship of Bhairava – and especially at the royal level – is not an isolated fact. For instance, it is a Vajracharya of Kathmandu who conducts the Bhairava Yatra at Nuwakot, a festival very much connected, on the symbolic level, with Nepalese kingship (Chalier-Visuvalingam, *Étude des fêtes*). The fact that the king – even one who calls himself "Hindu" in public – transcends sectarian differences, is not enough to explain this phenomenon. It seems that these Vajracharya brahmins, more numerous among the Newars than the Rajopadhyayas, have preserved certain esoteric traditions much better than their Hindu counterparts. It is thus Asakaji Vajracharya who gave me the details concerning the eight cremation grounds associated with the eight Bhairavas of the Valley (cf. Chalier-Visuvalingam, *Étude des fêtes* 29). Vajrayana Tantrism has borrowed a great deal from left-handed Shaivism, and some of its divinities such as Heruka, Chakrasamvara and Vajravarahi, were conceived after the model of (Vajra) Bhairava and of Kali. The ritual paradigms are unchanged (Sanderson, "Vajrayana"). Tantric *abhisheka* (consecrations) – both on the Hindu and the Buddhist sides – are charged with connotations of kingship. Even when

Bhairava is not, strictly speaking, the personal divinity of the Vajracharya concerned, it is only a question of adapting the Buddhist rituals to the Hindu context of their patrons. It is precisely during the Vijayadashami that the Khadga Yatra (sword-processions) takes place, during which the Vajracharya priests, trembling in a state of trance and accompanied by the Ashtamatrikas (eight mothers), brandish swords charged with divine power and (pretend to) attack the spectators (Anderson 153-54). The *khadgasiddhi* itself may be understood as the exteriorisation of the trance state experienced during transgressive rituals performed secretly in extreme left-handed Tantrism.

What is striking, however, is especially the manner in which the three socio-political levels have been integrated – by superposing the three *yajamana* (sacrificers), namely the *Thakali*, the *Juju* and the King – in order to constitute a single all-inclusive cult. It is worth noting that the *khadgasiddhi* coincides with a complete rotation of Pachali Bhairava among the twelve Jyapu families, as if this clan constituted in itself a mini-kingdom. This integration of top and bottom is revealed most fully at the intermediary level, which explains the importance still accorded to the *Juju* today. It is the same sacrificial schema that underlies both the renewal of the political power of the king and the accession of the Jyapu children to their full communal rights. The theme of "stealing" is common to the Jyapu and the *Juju* and even a Westerner like Gehrts Wagner was required literally to steal a goat in order to complete his initiation into a musicians' guild in Bhaktapur. The myths about Pachali Bhairava do not hesitate to draw parallels between the Jyapu Bhairava of the annual festival and the royal Bhairava of the Indra festival (supra 123). That is why the rotation of the jar among the houses of the *Thakali* must necessarily make the "detour" not only through the house of the *Juju* but also before the Hanuman Dhoka palace. Thus, what seems to be at the centre of the festival is not so much the political power of the king – be he Malla or Shah – but rather the "king" as a symbolic locus shared in a hierarchic way also by the *Juju* and the *Thakali*, not to mention the other actors who take part in this great ritual drama which is the cult of Pachali Bhairava. The king is, after all, only the *yajamana* par excellence, and his pre-eminence at a political level could have been contested at any moment by historical vicissitudes. The king-dominator – who is also, let us not forget, the king-victim – is, above all, the symbolic knot tying together the invisible threads which unite the whole of Nepalese society (cf. Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 592-93).[20]

7. Pachali Bhairava in the Hindu Pantheon: Kingship and Transgression

In my essay "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide," I have borrowed the theory of transgression – elaborated by

[20] Bear in mind that this concluding thought was penned in 1991, well before the patricidal assassination of King Birendra on 1 June 2001, and the upsurge of Maoist "terrorism" so representative of the centrifugal forces now threatening to tear the nation apart. While it is fashionable these days to decry the autocratic aspects of traditional kingship, insufficient attention has been paid to its unifying and "individuating" (borrowing the term here from Carl Jung) role at the symbolic level.

Sunthar Visuvalingam ("Transgressive Sacrality in the Hindu Tradition"; and "The Transgressive Sacrality of the *Dikshita*") on the basis of the semiotics of the clown of Sanskrit theatre – to frame a sacrificial model of Hindu kingship that converges on essential points with the problematic posed by two articles of G. Toffin ("Les aspects religieux de la royauté néwar au Népal"; and "Dieux souverains et rois dévots dans l'ancienne royauté de la Vallée du Népal"). These articles not only call into question the overly static and linear social hierarchy of Louis Dumont, but they also raise the question of the well attested identification of the Newar king with Bhairava. One may nevertheless wonder how the royal Bhairava can be integrated into the Hindu pantheon amidst such sovereign gods as Indra, Shiva and Vishnu. I shall conclude my section of this essay by showing how the cult of Bhairava can be deciphered precisely on the basis of the respective claims of these sovereign gods to kingship.

The festivals of Pachali Bhairava – and perhaps the ritual life of the Newars in general – are part of a royal cosmogony, representing the symbolic death and re-birth of the king as the sacrificer par excellence. The "pre-classical" *diksha* turned the sacrificer into an impure being, filled with a "dangerous sacrality" (Heesterman, "Vratya and Sacrifice" 12-15). On the first day of the Pachare festival (supra 128), the pure Shiva-Pashupati, Nepal's royal and "national" god par excellence, becomes Luku Mahadeva who was hidden all year long in a heap of rubbish like a *pishacha* (unclean demon), in order to receive offerings otherwise forbidden. He is worshipped by everybody, the non-Shaivaite Hindus and Buddhists included, which shows that this is not a sectarian phenomenon. Pachare is a festival of mother-goddesses involving Pachali Bhairava and above all his consort Bhadrakali. On the second day, the Nepali king would come, preceded by the Kumari on her white horse, in order to venerate Bhadrakali (supra 123). This ritual core gave birth to the "festival of horses," or Ghoda-Yatra, on the Tundikhel field, that is still organised by the army and presided over by the king of Nepal (Anderson 263-71; Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 232, 317, 338, 342-44). The basic elements of Pachali Bhairava worship, such as the *khadgasiddhi* or the perpetual fire, do not derive from a single Vedic sacrifice, such as the *Rajasuya* or the *Agnihotra*, but rather from the whole of the sacrificial system. The *Ashvamedha* or "horse sacrifice," reserved solely for triumphant emperors, had certainly disappeared centuries earlier from the Indian scene, but its ritual paradigm still seems to order the life of the Nepalese people.

The Tantric divinity Bhairava has taken on all the symbolism of the royal sacrificer who, during the *Ashvamedha*, would return to an "embryonic state" in the impure world of Varuna.[21] This explains why Bhairava is often represented by a pot symbolising the

[21] For king as the sacrificer, cf. Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* 27, 92 and chs. 2, 3; also cf. "Vratya and Sacrifice." My use of the term "embryonic" is taken from Kuiper's "Cosmogony and Conception: A Query":

> In the light of the current parallelism between myth and ritual, however, it should be noted that in the Vedic ritual of the initiation (*diksha*), the *dikshita* must again become an embryo ... in order to be reborn. The dangerous and inauspicious character of the *dikshita* while being tied ... must probably be explained from his being in Varuna's realm. The same notion of rebirth also underlies the statement of the ritual texts that the sacrificer by sacrificing regenerates his own self. (*Ancient Indian Cosmogony* 116)

womb (cf. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 352). The importance given to the eyes engraved on the pot underlines this assimilation (31). There is no need to resort to psychoanalysis to understand this symbolism, because the "thousand eyes" that Indra, the *netra-yoni*, bears on his own body are explicitly identified with the vagina by the Hindu tradition itself. The *tasi* (lemon) that, as in India, symbolises death and semen, condenses an entire embryonic process (see n15); so too does the association of Matsyeshvari (32), of the Sweto Bhairava dance (46), and of the *hathu-haye-gu* (39), with fish (cf. Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 376). It was during the conjunction called the *matsyodari-yoga* (fish-womb), when Benaras was enveloped, like an embryo, by the maternal waters of the Ganga, that the Kapalika Bhairava was liberated from his brahmanicide by coming out from a pond named Kapalamochana (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" 177-83). The Vedic king also emerged from a basin – from his death-like condition – by discharging his impurity onto a deformed scapegoat with whom he was identified.

The *jumbaka* had to be a brahmin, charged with evil, and the king himself was reborn as a brahmin on receiving the *diksha* (Heesterman, *The Ancient Indian Royal Consecration* 56, 78, 137, 160, 161 and n25).[22] The purity of the brahmin and the impurity of Bhairava seem to form the two extremes of the dialectic of the transgression that transforms the royal adept into a *maha-brahmana* (a brahmin par excellence). While the impurity of the royal *dikshita* is expressed through his identification with Bhairava as incarnated by the Malakar, his "brahmin-hood" is rather represented by his supposed "son" the god Ganesha. The true aspect of the "beautiful" Bhairava is as grotesque as that of the *jumbaka*, and he is as gluttonous as the *sarva-bhakshaka* (omnivorous) Ganesha. It is Bhairava himself who is (re)born as Ganesha from the womb of Ajima, who would have the same role here as the sacrificer's wife in the Vedic paradigm. What is more, the violent shaking of the jar at the precise moment of Ganesha's arrival confirms that it is Pachali Bhairava who also plays the role of the "mother" by giving birth to himself. Finally – and despite the distribution of roles at the social level of the festival – Bhairava, Ganesha and Ajima are a single symbolic entity derived explicitly from an embryonic process. That is why Ganesha – who himself has a belly like a jar (*kumbhodara*, *lambodara*, *mahodara*, etc., the last being also the name of one *Vidushaka*) – is explicitly identified with his own mother (Nai) Ajima (cf. n16). The crucial point here is that, despite the absence of the *purohita* and the practical effacement of the brahmins, as strictly defined, from this Newar festival, the hold of Brahminism is exercised above all at the symbolical level. The mythico-ritual universe mediated by the classical brahmin largely surpasses both his social body and the insistence on purity that forms the basis of the Hindu hierarchy.

Indra is the king as *yajamana* (sacrificer) par excellence, forming a couple in this regard with the *purohita* (officiating brahmin) who directs him through the rituals of sacrifice. In offering himself to the divinity through

[22] For the constant assimilation of the Hindu king – and of the brahmin – to an untouchable, see Shulman; and Gomes da Silva.

the intermediary of a victim tied to the sacrificial post, the Vedic king renewed his kingdom through his own rebirth. It is through this sacrificial violence, assimilated to a brahmanicidal killing of his *purohita* Vishvarupa, that the warrior-god of Dumézil's second function universalises himself ritually so as to annex not only the third function (fertility) but also the first function (sovereignty). Just as the sacrificer is bound by the cords of Varuna, the statuettes of Indra, wound with strings, are placed during the Indra Yatra in a prison-cage at the foot of poles, or on scaffolds so as to represent Indra like a thief with outspread arms. But the role of the sacrificial victim, during the Indra Yatra, is assumed by the "tribal" (Kirata) king Yalambara whose head, cut off by Krishna to prevent him from joining the "losing" side in the *Mahabharata* war, fell into the Indra Chowk where it is still venerated in the form of Akasha Bhairava. Already in the Sanskrit drama, the *Mricchakatika* (see n13), the brahmin hero being led to his sacrificial execution is compared to the pole carried towards the cremation ground at the south of the town at the end of the Indra festival. When the Indra pole is lowered, a funeral procession of Manandhars carries it to the southern cremation ground to be thrown in the Bagmati River. Then the pole is hacked into pieces which are used to feed the perpetual fire of the *pitha* of Pachali Bhairava (29, 58; curiously enough, the Lat-Bhairo stone pillar in Benares is said to have undergone a similar fate – destroyed by fire and thrown into the Ganga – only this time at the hands of Muslim weavers, who themselves regularly participated in its cosmogonic "marriage"). Indra, the royal sacrificer, and his sacrificial victim are one and the same.

After the classical reform of the Vedic sacrifice, the profane *yajamana* (sacrificer) is transformed by the *diksha* into a (temporary) brahmin, the pure being par excellence who stands at the summit of the Hindu hierarchy (Heesterman, *The Inner Conflict of Tradition* 154). The annual festival of Pachali, Panchakom, may have already existed in a Licchavi Pancharatra prototype as the "5-night sacrifice" of the (Rig Vedic) *Purusha* (*Sukta*), whereby the sacrificer-victim became identical with the whole universe. Vishnu would represent this properly brahmanic dimension of the king, through which he affirms himself as the conservator of the socio-religious order based on the pure/impure opposition (Toffin, "Dieux souverains et rois dévots dans l'ancienne royauté de la Vallée du Népal" 74-78). The identification of the king with both Indra and Vishnu is underlined by the raising of the pole of Pachali Bhairava, inside the precincts of the Atko Narayana temple, by the *Juju* exactly at the moment of the raising of the pole of Indra at Hanuman Dhoka (33-36). This is why the *Juju* attends the preliminary rituals inside the Atko Narayana temple first, before going to the *pitha* of Pachali Bhairava to supervise the blood sacrifices. On his way to the *pitha*, the *Juju* must sit down at a particular place where long ago his subjects used to come to pay homage to this "walking Vishnu." But this purification seems to be, in reality, the first phase of a dialectic of transgression that results in the death of the king-sacrificer through the intermediary of a substituted victim. The one-eyed Joshi, who, in front of the Vishnu temple, is placed within the enormous *kasi* (pot) – thrown very roughly till today onto the Vetala receiving the blood sacrifices for

Pachali Bhairava – thus prolongs the role of the brahmin *jumbaka* in the *Ashvamedha*.[23] This leads us to think that the third head (supra 134) hidden behind the two heads of the sacrificed goats during the *homa* (*Mamsahuti*) must have belonged to this deformed Joshi who represents the king-sacrificer. The Mupatra (Sanskrit: *Mahapatra*), a quasi-buffoonic figure, who at the end of the Indra Yatra at Bhaktapur "kills" with his sword the statuette of Indra on the pole (Nepali 64), first of all receives the crown of Vishnu before the temple of the latter on Dattatreya square.

Throwing grains of rice – which the wife of Pachali Bhairava forgets to do – is not only the way to cure (Sweto) Bhairava of his stomach-ache after his meal of children-fishes, but serves also to exorcise the possessed (Levy 128; cf. supra 123, 140). It is through the psycho-physical esoteric practices, codified in the Tantras, that Bhairava has assimilated the autochthonous religions with their sacred poles, as well as the ecstatic trance that supports them. Even in the philosophical system of "Kashmir Shaivism" in which Bhairava has become a metaphysical principle to be attained through a "Brahmanical" gnosis, this substratum is revealed through symptoms such as the trembling, swooning and fainting that accompany *avesha* (possession). Thus, the Newar king, inasmuch as he assumes the figure of the Tantric adept, seems to draw his magico-religious power from a Shamanic inspiration easily reinterpreted as *bhairavavesha* (possession by Bhairava). This is what happens, for instance, to the Dangol Dhami of Nuwakot, who celebrates on behalf of the whole Newar community the erection of the New year poles and drinks the sacrificial blood from many buffaloes, all the while wearing the royal insignia of the king of Nepal (46). The brahminised *dikshita* was first and foremost the consecrated warrior, the Vratya, comparable to later militant Shaivite ascetics like the Pashupatas and the Kapalikas (Heesterman, "Vratya and Sacrifice"). The Malakar dancer in trance, who brandishes his red sword to better incarnate Pachali Bhairava, would prolong the Shamanic aspect of Hindu kingship, even while revealing a transgressive dimension in this experience that relates it to the murderous fury of the warrior-king (supra 143). Hence, the *khadgasiddhi* inaugurates the day of Vijayadashami – the Kshatriya festival par excellence – which marks the resumption of military activities in Nepal and in India (Toffin, "Culte des déesses et fête du Dasai chez les Néwar [Népal]" 60, 67, 77; Biardeau "L'arbre *sami* et le buffle sacrificiel").

The founding-myth of the Indra Yatra and its calendar reveal that the king of the gods sacrifices himself to the goddess Taleju, who assumes the form of the Kumari and goes out on the day of the full moon of Bhadra in order to re-legitimise the power of the king for the following year. This day also marks the beginning of the *mahalaya shraddha*, during which ancestors are venerated, especially when the sun is in the sign of the virgin.[24] The synchronisation of the enthronement of the king, the veneration

[23] For details, see Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidushaka* 218; and Thite 68-69. Filling the *kasi* with water corresponds well to the fact that the *jumbaka* too was (drowned?) in the (amniotic) waters of a pond (cf. supra 132).

[24] The *kanasva* flowers carried in the *kasi* and covering both the Vetala and the altar of Pachali Bhairava are "a kind of flower sacred to the Sun God" (Manandhar 24, look under *kanhay svam*).

of the Shakti and the propitiation of the dead, can be explained only by the single underlying sacrificial schema. The role of Bhadrakali, consort of Pachali Bhairava, who puts on his blue dress to exchange, in turn, her sword with the king (supra 136), suggests the androgyny of the king Bhairava. At Nuwakot, for instance, the gender of the divinity inside the temple is most ambiguous and, even though the festival is called Bhairavi Ratha Yatra, it is the Dhami incarnating Bhairava, but still accompanied by his wife, who plays the most important role. Again, Jagannatha, the royal divinity in Puri, is esoterically assimilated not only to Bhairava when he is united with the Devadasi (dancer) representing Bhairavi; he is also directly identified with the goddess Kali. Toffin likewise emphasises how the Newar king drew his magico-religious power by identifying himself with his Shakti. In fact, the sexual liaison between the Tantric king and the goddess Taleju fits perfectly into the paradigm of the sacrificer returning to the womb to form the primordial androgyne. All these elements are found in the condensed scenario before the door of the palace at Hanuman Dhoka, where the king-buffalo is sacrificed before the impassive Kumari, precisely at the moment when Pachali Bhairava arrives from the *pitha* in the form of the jar. But this is done in such a way that the blood spouts onto Kali-Ajima, whom the myths assimilate indirectly to Taleju-Kumari (supra 123, 136).[25]

Tihar (Diwali), a festival during which Pachali Bhairava is especially venerated in his *dyahche* (supra 128), is also called *yama-panchaka* (the five days of Yama). Yama is propitiated directly and also through his different aspects: the dog, the crow and the cow (Anderson 164-74; Toffin, *Société et Religion chez les Néwar du Népal* 538-42). The dog is, above all, the animal of Bhairava, the sacred cow is the (feminised) brahmin, while the crow represents the Mahabrahmana (funeral priest).[26] The intimate relation between the brahmin and death is demonstrated, for instance, by the fact that at Bhaktapur the funeral mat of the Rajopadhyaya is used as the canvas for the painted image of Akasha Bhairava. Petrified at Tekudoban, near the confluence of the Bagmati and the Vishnumati, after wrapping himself in a funeral mat (supra 123), Pachali Bhairava, coming from Benaras, represents above all the kingship of death to whom everybody, without exception, is a condemned subject. As the Bhuteshvara (Lord of Spirits), he renews the power of the Indo-Nepalese king who, through the exchange of swords, appropriates the regenerative strength of the death of the Brahmanical sacrificer. The Indra statuette, put to death at the transposition of the Vedic sacrificial post at Bhaktapur, is explicitly called Yama Deo by the Newars. Nick Allen has proposed completing the Indo-European ideology of Georges Dumézil with a "fourth function," incarnated by Yama, that would represent the Other both as a devalorised and excluded group and as a

[25] For the theme of androgyny, and the overlapping Vedic and Tantric paradigms of sexuality in popular Hindu religion, see Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Union and Unity in Hindu Tantrism."

[26] For example, Dharmaraja Yudhisthira, the epic counterpart of Varuna-Mrtyu, finally gains access to *svarga* (paradise) only because he insists on being accompanied by his impure dog, who reveals himself to be Dharma (= Yama) in disguise. While his brahmin friend is being led to the sacrificial stake, the *vidushaka* (Maitreya) in the Sanskrit play *Mrcchakatika* is compared to the crows cawing for oblations (of human-flesh?) at the Indra festival. Recall also the ancient Vedic practice of sometimes interring the dead man enveloped within the body of a sacrificed cow.

central transcendent principle. If Bhairava, as Yamantaka, vanquishes this sovereign god of profane death to reign in his place on the *mahashmashana* (great cremation ground) that is the holy city par excellence of Varanasi, it is because Bhairava, this Absolute of "Kashmir Shaivism," is realised through an initiatory death that Yama himself would have represented in the Vedic religion.[27]

The perpetual fire beside the altar of Pachali Bhairava (pic. 4, see p. 173) must be linked to the role played by this Tantric god in the "Vedic" *Agnihotra* at Patan (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 266; and supra 121). In this ceremony, as opposed to the *Mamsahuti*, the sacrificial fire of the Rajopadhyaya priest, who is rather the incarnation of Mitra-Varuna, receives only pure vegetarian offerings. Michael Witzel, to whom I owe my knowledge of the *Agnishala*, adds that a barrier has been built to prevent Bagh Bhairava of Kirtipur from extinguishing, by his ferocious glance, the benefic fire of the *Agnihotra*. Indeed, the Vajracharyas would perform a similar but secret *Mamsahuti* (meat offering), annually, into the fire at this temple of this "Tiger" Bhairava. Agni is still venerated in the form of a demoniac image at Svayambhunatha, where a perpetual fire was also kept at the beginning of the nineteenth century. On the other hand, the *Agnihotrin* of Patan, when he is about to die, is still brought into the *Agnishala* to breathe his last. Bhairava would thus represent the baneful aspect of the sacrificial fire, that which manifests itself as the eater of corpses. After all, the "twice-born" used to sacrifice regularly to the Vedic Agni primarily in order to be reborn after death from the fiery womb of the funeral pyre. Half a century ago, a perpetual fire was still maintained in the royal palace of Hanuman Dhoka, whence citizens could borrow its flame, and Amshuvarman already mentions an *Agnishala* in the palace of Managriha. (Pachali) Bhairava – as we have seen at the end of the Indra Yatra (supra 148) – is the fire (of Consciousness) from which the sacrificing king is reborn.[28]

In the principal cremation ground (Chupinga) to the south of Bhaktapur is the sacred stone for the Masan (= *shmashana*) Bhairava who is

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[27] Nick Allen's talk, presented in Paris in 1989 to the same seminar series conducted by G. Toffin where the original French version of my own paper was delivered, also highlighted the "interferences" between this "fourth" and the (representations of the) remaining three functions. Visuvalingam pointed out that the would-be "fourth" was in fact not a (social) "function" at all but rather a reflection of (the effects of the dialectic of) transgressive sacrality within the operation of the other functions. Yama has been generally taken for an "Aryan" divinity related to the divine twins, the most recent argument being that of Asko Parpola, who attributes him to an "Iranian" (more specifically "Scythian" = Saka) cult that would have invaded the subcontinent from Afghanistan (BMAC). Without being able to develop the argument here, we hold rather that this whole complex – of kingship, death, judgment, solar symbolism and royal incest – may be traced back to a pre-"Indo-European" (para) Elamite cult. Charles Malamoud's interpretation of the Yama cult within the sacrificial and funerary paradigm is based on the assumption that the twin-incest did not take place (simply because of the incest taboo prevalent in all societies?). Not only does this do violence to the "studied" ambiguity of the Vedic myth in this regard, it also ignores the fact that among the Newars, for example, twins of opposed sex are ritually married before they separate to lead their independent lives (we owe this information to Nutan Sharma). What is vital from the perspective of transgressive sacrality is the very ambivalence of the incest.

[28] A phenomenological exploration of the (continuity between the Vedic and Tantric) symbolism of (the sacrificial and sexual) fire may be found in my section on "Bhairava-Consciousness and the All-Devouring Fire" (Chalier-Visuvalingam and Mopsik). My interest in this question began already with my Masters thesis in 1974 (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "El fuego y la muerte en el Hinduismo"), that is, even before I undertook Ph. D. research from 1977 in Benares (at the Hindu University) on Bhairava.

"conceived as being below the burning body. The body must be consumed before the spirit is free to leave the locality. The fire does this, but Masan Bhairava also is associated with the destruction of the body and the liberation of the spirit" (Levy and Rajopadhyaya 264). The esoteric Trika (or "Kashmir Shaiva") techniques for the universalisation of the all-devouring Fire of Consciousness were lived through as a mode of transgressive sacrality condensed into the mytheme of brahmanicide. Though the Puranic myth of the decapitation of Brahma does not seem to figure prominently in the mythology of the Newar Bhairava, the same principle has been introduced into the founding-myth of the Taleju temple at Bhaktapur. The only suitable place the invading Indian king, Harisimhadeva, could find for establishing his royal tutelary goddess – thus superseding the pre-existing Licchavi cult to Maneshvari – was the home of (the Tantric) *Agnihotra* (Brahmin) who always sat upon the stone of the Kshetrapal Bhairava within the courtyard of the (present) Taleju temple (Levy and Rajopadhyaya 236-37, 239n36, cf. 261, 264; and supra 148). This Rajopadhyaya's ritual suicide in his own Shiva temple, in protest against his forcible eviction, rather suggests – through the twisted logic of the myth – that the paradigm of "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide" (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava's Royal Brahmanicide") underlies, and conceptually unites, both the Vedic *Agnihotra* and the Tantric cult of the royal Taleju.

In front of the royal palace at Hanuman Dhoka, the statue of Kala Bhairava, known also as Adalata (court of justice) Bhairava – a towering, black and solitary figure – is the principal witness before whom state functionaries take an oath each year. This role corresponds precisely with his function of *Kotwal* (policeman-magistrate) in Benaras. Criminals and litigants would also swear while touching Bhairava's foot, and he, who bore false witness, it is alleged, vomited blood and died on the spot. Until the nineteenth century, the image received occasional human sacrifices, the same that (Mitra) Varuna already demanded to maintain, paradoxically, the terrifying *rta* (order) firmly hidden within the heart of the Vedic socio-cosmic order. But the Vetala receiving the blood of the sacrifice is, in reality, none other than Pachali Bhairava himself, the king-victim whose "sacred transgression" is represented by the deformity of the Joshi (cf. supra 148).[29] Kala Bhairava, who takes on the sins of the pilgrims in Benaras, is the scapegoat par excellence, and the brahmin *jumbaka* of the imperial *Ashvamedha* was Varuna himself as the black incarnation of Evil. The supreme judge is also the worst brahmanicide: if the merciless *Kotwal* imposes so just a punishment upon himself before extending his *karuna* (mercy) to his subjects, it is because his judicial murder is endowed with a properly "soteriological" significance or *bhairavi-yatana* which exculpates every pious Hindu who chooses to die in Benaras (Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Bhairava Kotwal of Varanasi").[30]

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[29] So too, the deformity of the clown of the Sanskrit drama, prolonging that of the *Varuna-jumbaka* (Kuiper, *Varuna and Vidushaka* 213-22, cf. 208-10), translates the transgressive dimension of the *purohita*, with whom the king formed an indissociable pair (see n14). Dumézil (*Flamen-Brahman* 28-29) had already suggested that the *purohita* may have originally functioned as the scapegoat of the Vedic king.

The specificity of Nepal could thus be summed up as the passage from the Vedism of the Aryan Licchavis to the Shamanism of the autochthonous Tibeto-Burman populations, without necessarily taking the detour of Bhakti that promoted Vishnu and Shiva – along with Brahma – to the rank of the supreme trinity in India. The exaggeration of the values of purity, that gave birth to classical Brahmanism, seems to respond to the challenge posed by renunciation of the Buddhistic type, that Hinduism, in its turn, has sought to co-opt through Bhakti. The religious struggle, which was intense in India, has paradoxically seen Buddhism adopting the structures of a Hinduism that integrated, in its turn, Buddhist values and innovations. The real strength of Buddhism – that which assured its own identity with regard to Hinduism – came from the beginning from its privileged connections with cultures foreign to Brahmanism. The relative independence of Buddhism vis-à-vis the caste society would have given it a privileged role in the process of acculturation between Aryans and indigenous people. But renunciation presupposes a profane world rejected in favour of transcendence. This situation corresponds neither to Vedic culture nor to tribal culture, and could have been realised only in a very limited way in the Kathmandu Valley. Vajrayana practice differs from Tantric Hinduism essentially in its philosophical interpretation, which amounts to very little as far as the functioning of Nepali society is concerned. Newar civilisation appears rather as a "Hinduised" sacred world in which Vedic, Buddhist and tribal elements are fused into a mythico-ritual synthesis that has never been seriously challenged by renunciation. Whereas in the Indian context, the disappearance of cosmogonic festivals has reduced the royal Indra to a miserable figure before the sovereign gods of Bhakti, the underlying sacrificial paradigm permitted the Newar god-king to easily assimilate the autochthonous religions, especially Shamanism, through the Tantric figure of Bhairava. The conservative values of the Vedic Mitra are retained in the Brahmanical representations of Narayana as a brahmin-king, in Pashupati as an ascetic-king, and even in the Buddha as a renouncing-king (the royal deity at the "Hindu" Pashupatinatha temple is crowned once a year as the Buddha), but the values of transgression, once the prerogative of Varuna, were simply taken over by Bhairava.

Sunthar Visuvalingam

C. Between Lhasa and Benaras: Vedic Sacrifice, Buddhist Tantricism and Tribal Cultures

Pachali Bhairava, petrified beside the cremation ground on the Bagmati-Ganga, represents an interiorised experience of death, transgression and rebirth. It is around this shared experience that the Hindu sacrificial, Buddhist Tantric and tribal Shamanic dimensions of the Bhairava cult are differentially articulated. The co-opting of Buddhist castes and Vajrayana adepts into the Hindu socio-religious universe seems to have been facilitated by a specifically

[30] See also our articulation of the judiciary murder of Bhairava and the martyrdom of the Muslim warrior, Ghazi Miyan, in Benaras (Visuvalingam and Chalier-Visuvalingam, "Between Mecca and Benares").

Tantric Buddhist reading of this Vedic symbolism of sacrificial death. For their part, the autochthonous populations, particularly those that have undergone religio-cultural fusion to constitute present-day Newar ethnicity, have readily assimilated (the proponents of) Hindu-Buddhist Tantricism because it not only incorporated their socio-economic infrastructures but also elevated their Shamans into prestigious religious guarantors of the emerging "Hindu" polity.

1. Bhairava as the Royal Sacrificer from Hindu Benaras

If the royal Bhairava is repeatedly said to have come from Benaras, this is because the symbolic geography of Kathmandu has been subjected to "colonisation" by a Hindu sacrificial ideology that had been invested most fully in the *mahashmashana* (great cremation ground) of the Hindu universe. On emerging from the impure death-like embryonic condition of the *diksha,* the Vedic king offered himself in sacrifice through a substitute victim attached to the sacrificial *yupa* (pole) which represented the *axis mundi*. This is represented beside the Kapalamochana tank in Benaras by (the stump of) an ancient pillar which has long been identified as the *lat* (staff or cudgel) of the policeman-magistrate Bhairava. Lat Bhairava is, in fact, the ancient Mahashmashana Stambha (pillar) where Kala Bhairava used to not only devour the sins of pilgrims but also administer the "punishment/suffering" of Bhairava or *bhairavi yatana*, which alone conferred moksha (final emancipation) even on the worst of sinners. The *Kotwal* (policeman-magistrate) apparently presided over the public execution of criminals in what was probably a significant cremation ground, which would account for the terrible character even of its metaphysical transposition. Once a year, the royal head of (Kala) Bhairava is still brought in procession to "crown" the pillar and to celebrate the cosmogonic marriage of this *linga* of Bhairava with the adjacent maternal well.

It is this transformative paradigm – whereby esoteric Tantric notions of internalised death and sexual union are both derived from and re-inscribed within the symbolic universe of the archaic Vedic sacrifice – that has been extended to Nepal to form the integral basis of a royal cosmogony where the New Year poles are simultaneously the sacrificial *yupa* and the phallic *linga*. The cosmogonic *linga* of the Bisket Yatra at Bhaktapur is explicitly identified with Kashi Vishvanatha who came from Benaras in the form of Kala Bhairava, only to be decapitated in honour of his consort Bhadrakali. Their sexual union is re-enacted both by the collision of their respective chariots and the erection of the pole in the hollow mound of earth. It is also certainly not accidental that the royal festival of Indra's *dhvaja* (banner) at the capital, Kathmandu, coincides with the marriage of Lat Bhairava which is celebrated exactly on the full moon of Bhadra which signals the beginning of the season for death-rituals. Though these royal cosmogonies were no doubt originally borrowed and adapted from Hindu India, it is the present-day ethnography of Newar Tantricism that allows us to reconstitute, in this manner, the true significance of Bhairava even in his native city of Benaras, the socio-religious centre of Hinduism.

2. Bhairava as the Tantric Adept from Buddhist Lhasa

The royal Bhairava also appears as the transgressive Tantric adept, endowed with magico-religious powers, who has transcended all sectarian distinctions. The "Hinduisation" of Newar Buddhism was however not a simple surrender to the caste-ideology and the underlying values of the Brahmanical sacrifice. The tutelary divinity of the gardeners is not Bhairava but Bhadrakali, who is for them essentially no different from the Buddhist Vajravarahi. The Vajracharyas themselves primarily worship other Bhairava-like divinities like Chakrasamvara, Heruka, and Mahakala, and distinguish between their own private rituals and their officiation at the public festivals of the Hindus. The relative independence of the Buddhist re-reading of Hindu sacrificial paradigms is best demonstrated by the manner in which Shaiva Kapalika themes have been reworked into the Tibetan cycle of the subjugation of Rudra, in a context where Hinduism had been unable to exercise similar pressures on the socio-political level.

The immeasurable world-pillar, from which Bhairava emerged to appropriate Brahma's central head, is reduced to more handy ritual proportions in the *khatvanga* (cranial-staff) which the Kapalika wields as a weapon. On the basis of the explicit textual evidence of Tibetan Buddhist Tantras further elucidated by the oral traditions of their lamaistic practitioners, the skull-topped *khatvanga*, provided with a *yajnopavita* (Brahmanical cord), has not only been identified with the world-tree, also called Amrita and growing in the cremation ground. The entire symbolic complex has been derived from esoteric psycho-physical, especially sexual, techniques centring on the production of the ambrosia of *mahasukha* (supreme felicity), through a process of alternating ascent and descent within the *sushumna*. This ritual system refers back to the liberating murder by (a Buddhist divinity like Heruka assimilated to) Bhairava (Jigs-byed) of the demonised, and still terrible, Rudra, but in a scenario that deliberately underlines the consubstantiality of divine killer and demoniac victim amidst the transgressive valorisation of impurities (like excrement, etc.) converted into nectar. Though philosophically elaborated in the light of specifically Buddhist tenets, the underlying techniques are indistinguishable from those of the corresponding Shaiva Tantras and the formal symbolic system is clearly derived from the Hindu, and even Vedic, universe. Like Mahakala, the *sushumna* is said to devour Kala (death) represented by the alternating lateral breaths; and in the Tibetan Tantras Rudra "eats" or is "eaten" by his mother in the cremation ground beside the cosmic tree called "Amrita" or "Khatvanga" and especially "Fornication," and ultimately attains deliverance to become Mahakala.

The erection of the *linga*, which is what the poles representing Indra and Bhairava are called in Nepal, signifies above all the neutralisation and annihilation of *prana/apana* (the opposing vital breaths) resulting in the raising of the *kundalini* up the median channel or *sushumna* in the very act of sexual (and even incestuous) intercourse. If the most virtuous of saints cannot aspire to that salvation which even and especially brahmanicides are assured of in Benaras, this is only because Bhairava as executioner-cum-victim is identical with the all-devouring Fire of

Consciousness that consumes all the impurity of sin, and because the sacrificial death was itself assimilated to its fiery ascent up the *sushumna* as the *(maha) shmashana* (pillar), now remaining as the Lat Bhairava. The perpetual cremation at Manikarnika, where three streams unite(d) to flow out as the Brahmanala or Pitamahashrotas into the milky way of the Ganga, confirms that all death in Benaras is (modelled on) the initiatic process whereby this flame of consciousness pierces through the sinciput at the *Brahmarandhra* (aperture of Brahma) to be freed forever. Even the apparently alternative fate, which is reserved especially for those who sin in Benaras itself before dying there, conforms rigorously to the above model of initiatic death. They are transformed into *rudrapishacha* (ghoulish Rudras) before undergoing the *rudra yatana* (punishment of Rudra) at the Mahashmashana Stambha. The figure of the Rudrapishacha appears to be a mythic projection of the *pretavad* (fiendish) Pashupata ascetics who once haunted these cremation grounds. The (mystic) decapitation of the Tibetan adept, corresponding to the *kapala-kriya* (skull-breaking) performed on the Benaras corpse, when the divine life-force escapes through the *brahmarandhra*, also corresponds to the murderous liberation of Rudra by a Bhairava-like (Jigs-byed) divinity who penetrates the demon at the base of the spine to flash like an arrow or comet through "the opening of the Door of Heaven." Rudra had already received the Tantric initiation in his original incarnation as the master "Deliverance-Salvation/Black," whose name "alludes to his ambiguous nature: he will do evil, but will be finally delivered with the status of the god Mahakala." This salvation often occurs in the explicit context of copulation belonging to the same symbolic complex, which is not foreign to the Hindu cremation-rites. If Bhairava, the Brahmanical *dikshita* from Benaras, can remind the Vajracharyas of the Vedic roots of their Buddhist Tantras, then Bhairava, the Tibetan Lama from Lhasa, could easily return the compliment by explaining to the Hindus the esoteric content of not just their royal cosmogony but their death rituals as well.

3. Bhairava as the Newar Shaman of Tribal Nepal

What has happened to the indigenous religion of Nepal in the course of these centuries of cooperative rivalry between Brahmins and Lamas for the souls of the Newars?

> The early chronicles identify the Kiranti with the Kirata when they affirm that the Valley Kirata, vanquished by the Licchavis, settled in the region between the Tamur and the Arun rivers, a region embraced by the Kirant Pradesh.... Traditional ties of these eastern hill people with the Kathmandu Valley are apparent from customs that ordain the annual return to the Valley of some Kirantis for the observance of religious ceremonies. (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 10)[31]

The Buddhist city of:

> Patan, alone among the Valley towns, is persistently associated with the tradition of the Kirata, the people who appear to have been the Valley indigenes. A mound, and probable *stupa* ruin, at the city center is traditionally held to have been the palace of Patuka, a Kirata king who, it is said, abandoned his palace in Gokarna to rebuild it in Patan. The mound is known simply as Kiranchem, the Kirata's Palace

> (literally, House), or as Patukadom, Patuka's Hillock. The Newar name for Patan, Yala, is generally believed to perpetuate the name of another Kirata king, Yellung or Yalambara, the alleged founder of the dynasty and of the city. (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 96)

Mock conflicts during the Indra Yatra commemorate the invading Aryan chief's capture by the tribal Yalambara, whose decapitated head has became the present Akasha Bhairava at Asan *tol* (supra 146). We may now even reverse our perspective, and argue that the acculturation process discernible among the Newars may reflect the cultural history of Benaras itself, for it was not always the socio-religious centre of classical Brahmanism as we know it to be today.

> The Newari word *yala* means the same as *yupa*, and, more broadly, signifies any sacrificial post, pillar, or standard. The tall poles raised for Bisket- and Indra-Jatra, and on many other ritual occasions, are known to Newars even now as *yalasin* (wooden poles). Perhaps both names, Yala and Yupagrama, were determined by the existence of a small community associated with Vedic sacrifice at this crossroads.... One is tempted to see in the ancient Patan tumuli and the names Yala and Yupagrama, an analogy with pre-Buddhist pillars and tumuli of northern India. Objects of worship, the pillars and tumuli dotted the Uttarapatha, the great northern trade route, and clustered around the trading centers.... Patan, almost certainly a stopover on the trans-Himalayan trade route, whose southern terminus intersected the east-west Uttarapatha, may mark the northernmost extension of this practice. (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 97 and n79)

Lat Bhairava, which is surrounded by the ruins of Buddhist architectural monuments, was itself probably a (pre)Ashokan pillar standing at the central crossroads of ancient Benaras, where the Uttara-Patha crossed the road to Sarnath. Hiuen Tsang (seventh century) saw it standing beside a huge stupa. Even during the reign of Aurangzeb (seventeenth century), when it stood within the compound of a beautiful mosque, the Muslim caretakers

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[31] Gautama V. Vajracharya, in his commentary on a Newar painting of the *Pilgrimage to Gosainkund* that was displayed in a recent (till 17 August 2003) exhibition at the Chicago Art Institute, attempts to connect the Newars to the Nipas primarily on philological considerations:

> The Newars, for example, call themselves Neva: thus the village of modern Nuwakote, which is designated here as Neva Kuti, literally means "the Newar town." This information tallies with the fact that in classical and modern Tibetan languages Nuwakote is always known as Bal-po rdzon (Newar village). Levi seems to be correct when he suggested that the aborigines called Nipas could be the ancestors of the Newars. Moreover, the well-known chronicle *Gopalarajavamshavali* tells us that the Nepas (in Sanskrit, Nipas) were the cattle breeders who migrated to the valley from Malakha, apparently a small village in Nuwakote. Since in the Newari language *pa* and *va* are often interchangeable, the word Nepal actually means the house of the Nipas, just as Himal means the abode of snow.... Apparently, the story of the sacred pools of the valley and their link with the sacred lake was introduced by the Nipas, the ancestors of the Newars, when they migrated from Nuwakote. Besides, the Nipas, the ancestors of the Newars, are ancient people who lived in the Himalayan region. The earliest reference to these people is found in the Vedic literature. The ritual of the pilgrimage is not, however, the original contribution of the Nipas but of the inhabitants of Uttarakuru, who performed a conceptually similar annual ritual of traveling along the bank of the Sarasvati river. (*Himalayas, An Aesthetic Adventure* 284)

In support of this plausible Nipa (strand in the) ancestry of the Newars, we may recall the importance of Bhairavi Ratha Yatra of Nuwakot for the (annual renewal of now Kathmandu-based) Nepali royalty: every year a "shaman" the *dhami*, in a "trance" of sorts while wearing the insignia of the king, becomes possessed by Bhairava/i to utter oracles for the well-being of the kingdom (Chalier-Visuvalingam and Visuvalingam, "Bhairava and the Goddess" 285–94). Would the Nipa have thereby retained the shamanic roots of their religious system after having adopted, as the urbanised Newars, the "Hindu-Buddhist" institution of kingship?

spoke of the remains of a Buddhist king of Bhutan reportedly buried within the mound. The "Ashokan" stupas of Patan could have "originated as pre-Buddhist funerary mounds, which, as in India, were converted into Buddhist monuments" (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 96), for the original stupa-cult itself synthesised Vedic *yupa-yashti* (sacrificial symbolism) with pre-Aryan funerary practices but within the non-violent ethics of ahimsa. Notions of initiatic death may have thus already been important to Benaras, within a (pre)Mahayana Buddhist framework, even before they were reworked into the antinomian practices of Shaiva Tantricism.

Benaras is particularly sanctified because there the Ganga flows northwards towards its own source. Kala Bhairava bathed in the Kapalamochana tank precisely during a heavy monsoon flood when the Ganga began to flow backwards into the Varana river transforming the whole of Benaras into the primordial mound of archaic cosmogony. This identification of the fertile mound with the very source of the life-giving waters – the Gaumukh (mouth of the cow), in the case of Benaras – is expressed in the founding myths of some Nepali tribes rather in terms of a clod of earth flowing downstream from the source to coagulate at the present site of the tribal settlement. Even before the arrival of the Licchavis upon the Nepali stage, Buddhist penetration may have transformed an indigenous cosmogony of the primordial mountain into the worship of the stupa at Svayambhunatha (Slusser, *Nepal Mandala* 298-302; Gutschow and Basukala). Svayambhu, which is ritually connected with a Kotwal Bhairava at the gorge where the Bagmati exits from the valley, was probably the site of a pre-historic cult related to the draining of the Kathmandu Valley (there is a similar draining "myth" associated with the Dal lake in the Kashmir Valley). A similar acculturation of a pre-Aryan cosmogony centred on Benaras may have occurred under Buddhist auspices before it was eventually incorporated into the sacrificial paradigm of the Bhairava cult.

The *Kashi Khanda* claims that Shiva himself was once a stranger to his own sacred city (Eck 146-57). The local traditions recall an ancient period when Benaras was ruled by a righteous king (Divodasa) but without any of the Hindu gods. Not only was Sarnath the site where the Buddha (supposedly) set the Wheel of the Law in motion, but Benaras seems to have become a centre of Buddhism even before it became the bastion of classical Brahmanism. It is through a long series of ruses that the Hindu gods are depicted as having gained a foothold within the city of the heretics. They were finally obliged to preach "protestant" Buddhism in order to wean away the city from its original dharma, and it was only then that the Benarasis had no alternative but to accept the sacrificial ideology. The ideal life-style of popular Benaras culture or *Benarasipan*, as incarnated in Kashi Vishvanatha, seems to have been inspired by the wild, eccentric Pashupata ascetic. Even now Benarasi "orthodoxy" is of a very peculiar kind, and the local brahmin *literati* still take pride in their habits of pan-chewing and *bhang-consumption* (Visuvalingam, "Towards and Integral Appreciation of Abhinavagupta's Aesthetics of Rasa"). The continuing worship of *bir-babas*, etc., probably goes back to the *yaksha* cult of pre-Aryan times. It is perhaps more than a mere reflection of recent "Hinduisation" that

the Kirantis of Nepal still trace their mythical origins to Benaras.

Finally, we may note that Prof. F. B. J. Kuiper's reconstruction of *Ancient Indian Cosmogony* (90-137) reduces the central Rig Vedic creation myth of Indra slaying Vritra – which was celebrated in New Year (pole) festivals similar to those which have survived among the Newars but have been lost in India – to the socio-cosmic exteriorisation of a *regressus ad uterum*. He finds parallels to the primordial mound in other non-Aryan archaic cultures, even in primitive religions, and derives the archetype from an *anamnesis* undergone during a shamanising experience. In that case, it would have been only a matter of time before the Brahmanical socio-religious ideology of the dominant Aryans and the pre-existing tribal worlds of the subcontinent were brought together within a single overarching symbolic universe.[32] In his recent linguistic analysis of *Aryans in the Rigveda*, Kuiper concludes that Sanskrit itself "had long been an Indian language when it made its appearance in history" (*Aryans in the Rigveda* 94).

> The inherited Vedic culture, however, must for a long time have remained dominant, notwithstanding the foreign influence that made itself felt: a foreign myth could only be adopted by transforming it into an Indra-myth and non-Aryan sorcerers were incorporated and became Vedic *rishis*, authors of a separate collection of hymns.... As a sociological term "Aryan" denotes all those who took part in the sacrifices and festivals. There is nothing novel in this

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32 Finally, I want to call attention to the social background of the Nine Durga Newar cult. As pointed out, the *guthi* association attached to the deities is a highly organised system, maintaining a moral and communal solidarity between its members, and cooperating in the carrying out of rituals and festivals. But what is interesting is that this type of social grouping falls almost totally outside the caste-system. It is true that notions of purity and pollution still prevail in the internal organisation of the cult and that some religious specialists from other castes are called on certain occasions. Yet, on the whole, the group is socially and ritually self-sufficient. What is more, Navadurga *guthi* highlights such values as egalitarism, dichotomy between initiates and non-initiates, territorial bonds, village unity, which are secondary or alien to the caste system. Emphasis is placed on "horizontal solidarity," cooperation within a single localized caste, instead of the "vertical solidarity," so characteristic of the caste society. Like other Newar secret associations related to ritual dance and possession, this type of *guthi* irresistibly reminds us of the groups of shamans of the hill tribes of Nepal, especially the ones of the Northern Magars studied by M. Oppitz (1991) and Anne de Sales (1991). Even if such closed *guthi* groupings are a mere leftover in the changing modern context, they are still crucial for the fullest understanding of Kathmandu Valley civilization. From this point of view, at least, the dangerous Navadurga Hindu goddesses have been tamed by Newar social institutions. (Toffin, "A Wild Goddess Cult in Nepal" 249)

Perhaps, what's really in question here is not so much some radical incompatibility between tribal values and pre-modern Hindu society, but rather the "sociologising" approach to caste and to the underlying pure/impure opposition (Visuvalingam, "The Transgressive Sacrality of the *Dikshita*" 433)?

What's especially noteworthy about Toffin's conclusions above, is that when Elizabeth presented the ethnographic portion of this paper in Paris (16 June 1989), the primary objection he voiced was our recognition of an (antecedent) "shamanic" core to Newar rites of "possesion" (and ultimately to the Bhairava cult itself), whereas Anne de Sale herself expressed sympathy for this approach. After refusing to publish the original French version of this paper ("Le roi et le jardinier") in *Classer les Dieux* (and we leave it to our readers to judge whether it "fits in" with the other papers in that volume and, more importantly, addresses its proposed theme of "classifying the gods"), he repeated the same objections during Elizabeth's formal thesis defence. Ironically, he now affirms this thesis above, as if it were his opinion all along, apparently unaware that we had taken the trouble to argue, against his objections, for these "shamanising" links to a tribal infrastructure in the very same volume as his own paper (see Chalier-Visuvalingam and Visuvalingam, "Bhairava and the Goddess" 291-92). Similar unacknowledged "reversals" of his position on other issues such as the king-victim, Bhairava as the epitome of "transgressive sacrality" have been prepared for by not only refusing to publish our work and, more recently, dismissing our theories as "out-dated," but also cutting off funds for research, insisting for example that he would study the twelve-yearly *khadgasiddhi* festival himself.

> definition. Not always, however, may it have been realized that many among these "Aryans" had non-Aryan names and that this fact points to some inescapable conclusions. Statements to the effect that the Rigveda was no longer purely Aryan ... are therefore correct to the extent that they refer to the language and ethnic components: both were "Aryan." Culturally, however, the Rigvedic society was Aryan without quotes, but this reveals how ambiguous the term is. (*Aryans in the Rigveda* 96)

It was only natural – and perhaps inevitable – that Buddhism, which peacefully mediated this ongoing process of acculturation – and well beyond the confines of the Indian subcontinent – had rapidly assimilated, developed, systematised and propagated these techniques and their symbolic encoding, thereby contributing to the consolidation of Tantric tradition.

4. Towards an "Acculturation" Model of "Hinduism" and Indian Religious History

> In this way, the transgressive ideology upheld by Madame Chalier – and that may be called the sacrificial ideology – presents two opposed faces; on the one hand, the dynamic and ambivalent sacred, that manifests itself in violent transgression, and on the other hand, the perfect stasis of transcendence.
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> This double-faced ideology indeed seems to be just as much at the background of the Vedic sacrifice as of the cult of Bhairava, saturated with sacrificial resonances and finding transcendence once again in Bhairava-Anuttara.
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> From this point of view, the current acculturation theories – Hindu/tribal dichotomy, "great" and "small" tradition, Brahmanical supremacy or absorbing more or less successfully the autochthonous religions – to which the author perhaps gives too much place, contributes nothing essential to the central thesis. The fundamental double structure is already in place from the beginning, in Vedic sacrificial thought, and ready to develop and renew itself – which seems to accord well with the views of the author. Hence, there is no need to invoke elements in tribal or other terms, nor to write a conjectural history (as in the case of Nepal). Rather, there is a need to reconsider acculturation – a task to which the study of Madam Chalier, in fact, invites us. (Heesterman, Citation from official French report on thesis defense by Chalier-Visuvalingam; translation mine)[33]

What is the fundamental problem

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[33] Heesterman was, from the outset, enthusiastic in his endorsement of the paradigm of "transgressive sacrality" (TS) and immediately accepted when I visited him in Leiden in 1984 to personally solicit his participation in the international pilot-conference on this topic at the 1985 South Asia conference in Madison. This was reflected, for example, in his choice of the topic "The Vedic Origins of Vegetarianism" for his keynote paper to the entire conference, while at the same time delivering a paper on "The Notion of Anthropophagy in Vedic Ritual" to our TS sub-conference. Similarly, at Elizabeth's thesis defense, he intervened forcefully, in the face of Toffin's reservations, to support Elizabeth's interpretation of the king as the (symbolic) victim, by pointing out that this was already true of the Vedic *Rajasuya* that Toffin himself had seen as a likely model of the Pachali Bhairava festival. Though largely indebted to Heesterman for his "transgressive" understanding of the (not just "pre-classical") Vedic sacrifice, my exchanges with him have focused on the following differences: Heesterman's misleading use of the term "transcendence" to characterise the purified "classical" Brahmanical ritual system, thereby simply assimilating the sacrificer to the (Buddhist and Jaina) renouncer; his perception of the "inner conflict" of Vedic tradition as a "problem" doomed to remain unresolved, rather than as a wilfully maintained dialectical paradigm and cultural resource; and, finally, the lack of any real attempt to think classical Brahmanism and radical Tantrism together within a single paradigm, whose Janus-faced orientation would be explicable only by rethinking "Hinduism" as a "semiotic" strategy adopted by the Vedic sacrificial ideology for assimilating its Other. Why was the "pre-classical" transgressive dimension, largely rejected from the public face of classical Brahmanism, reworked into the emerging forms of Tantric doctrine and praxis, with brahmins par excellence, like Abhinavagupta, straddling both worlds?

posed by what we already know (and as merely sketched in this paper) of the complex and inextricable mesh of Newar religious culture and, by extension, of the difficulty of defining "Hinduism" (prompting some Indologists to deny its very existence writing it off as a recent "construction")? Despite the presence among them of (even Buddhist) "Brahmins" (often with mongoloid features that are almost as striking as the black skin of some *kurukkal* Shaiva priests of Dravidian South India!), the Tibeto-Burman speaking Newars clearly do not belong to the "ethnicity" (the "Licchavis") that would have initially introduced the Vedic tradition into the Kathmandu Valley, much less into the subcontinent. The "memory" of this cleavage is expressed in the opposition between Indra and Bhairava, which even finds festive enactment as a ritualised "conflict" between the invading Aryan chief and the indigenous people of the Valley. Nevertheless, Newar society is held together by a "Hindu" sacrificial schema and mythological frame of reference, the ritual trunk of which, while proliferating like the Indian banyan (*ficus religiosa*), is firmly rooted in the soil of Vedic tradition that, as a separate and independent current, has been reduced to a mere vestige and shadow of itself (as in the Tantricised *Agnihotra* of Patan). The challenge for the contemporary scholar deciphering the religious system "from the outside" is to account satisfactorily for the "acculturating" process through which originally autonomous elements would have fused together to constitute a single (admittedly hierarchised and segmented) society and, conversely, tolerated a constant fission of subgroups even while holding them together organically within a shared universe of representations. What ethnography reveals to us, when deciphered from the vantage point of the cult of (Pachali) Bhairava and in the light of the larger religio-cultural history of the subcontinent, is that these diverse representations have been woven into the often unrecognisable and bewildering mosaic of a single fabric through an unceasing, never simply given but ever renewed, semiotic process: it is this cognitive activity, of which the Newars, to varying degrees in the course of their daily lives, are themselves both the objects and the agents, that has secreted the proliferating signs that glue together a coherent symbolic order still centred, through the "person" of the king-Bhairava (as through the royal *vidushaka*), on transgressive disorder.[34] Freed from the materiality of the sacrifice and the constraints of real life, this symbolic order finds its purest

[34] Like Prof. Antonio de Nicolás, in chapter 3 of his intutive *Meditations Through the Rig Veda* on "Culture and Meaning: The Hymns and the Sacrifice," we believe that this was already the original preoccupation of Vedic religion: the *Rig Veda* "narrates the struggle of the Aryan families of 'seers' (*rishis*) as they tried to unify the world of diversity and opposition around them through sharing in a common 'vision' – a common 'viewpoint' (*darshanam*). India was the battle ground of this struggle and the intended reconciliation, and to India we owe what no other nation has been able to offer …" (51); "the fact is that the Indian civilization, like any other great civilization, is a composite creation of the influence and dialectical tension of many civilizations…. What is significant in the Indian Aryan case, is that the Aryans of India 'heard/saw' this diversity and tried to reconcile its continuity and innovation through the sacrifice, a condition which escapes any reader of the Rig Veda if he does not exclusively attend to the text itself and share in its original intentionality" (52). It is even likely that the roots of this preoccupation are to be found in (the elite of) the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation, whose ethnic, linguistic and religious diversity is only beginning to be adequately appreciated.

expression in the (classical) drama that unfolds around the well-formed (royal) hero who forms a bi-unity with his *alter ego*, the deformed *vidushaka*.[35]

The central problem posed by the history of Indian religions, up till and even beyond the Islamic era, is the emergence, consolidation and extension of this shared semiotic system that admitted of a multiplicity of regional variants and accommodated divergent, even conflicting, doctrinal positions. This macro-history is composed of a number of inter-related mysteries some of which have been addressed in the above study: the emergence and disappearance of Buddhism as a dynamic and independent cultural force, the ambivalent relationship between Vedic sacrifice and Tantric praxis, the nature and role of Indian kingship vis-à-vis the competing religious paradigms, the integration of tribal cultures and diverse ethnicities into a larger "Aryan" discourse, and ultimately the "processual logic" that presided over the elaboration of an elastic symbolic universe that was able to encompass and regulate such unity-in-diversity. The parties that competed over and thereby contributed towards this emerging common trunk of discourse took their stand on priorities that were not mutually incompatible. Though the most insistent on "doctrine" (non-Self, impermanence, etc.) and individual salvation, Buddhism, unlike the Judeo-Christian-Islamic tradition, was characterised from the beginning by a healthy distance from the world, an open-endedness towards the future, a distrust of external (at least to the collective *Sangha*) authority, a readiness to experiment and innovate that rapidly assimilated and sought to synthesise cultural elements from every side, thus serving as a catalyst in the forging of this common discourse. The persisting Shamanic core of the religious life of the diverse "tribal" communities, on the other hand, would have ensured the development and conservation of this esoteric "bodily" dimension, as reflected in Tantricism, within and despite the adoption of an urban material culture impregnated by a mercantile ethos.[36] By subscribing to the Hindu-Buddhist pantheons, rituals, and myths, these localised communities were able to overcome their relative isolation, communicate with each other, gradually fuse through symbiosis and eventually constitute new ethnicities, like that of the Newars. What is important, from the perspective of these diverse and distinct

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[35] Just as the (supermassive) "black-hole" at the very hub of the galactic organisation, gives birth to and feeds upon its host system, mysteriously regulating even its furthest reaches through some intangible synchronicity, the sacrificial *rta* (order) too revolves around a deliberately maintained chaos, disruptive and deadly, that would be the source of all life. This might not be a gratuitous analogy for such esoteric notions surrounding death have been expressed through astronomical correlations in India, Mesopotamia, Egypt, South America, etc.

[36] This coexistence, opposition and complementarity between ascetic practices and values, on the one hand, and a mercantile mentality, on the other, would have already characterised the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation (c. 2500-1900 BC), which was an integral part of the larger Third Millennium Middle Asian interaction sphere (to use the terminology of Gregory Possehl). As such, the socio-economic conditions that gave birth to Buddhism could be understood, in important respects, as a re-emergence of an earlier ideological tension that had been overlaid for more than a thousand years, at least in north-west of the subcontinent, by a pastoral Vedic tradition that devalued the life of the city (see n6). Instead of attempting to derive one unknown (the conditions facilitating the rise and rapid spread of Buddhism) from another (viz., the value system and religious representations of the Indus-Sarasvati civilisation), this paper takes Magadha of the sixth century BC as constituting a radical break. However, a complete picture would eventually require a better assessment of the religious life of the elites of Harappa and Mohenjodaro, and its enduring impact on the surrounding and subsequent cultural developments. This may well demand a re-evaluation of the role and significance of Jainism as well

indigenous communities, would be that this overarching "Aryan" umbrella not just allowed but facilitated the adaptation and retention of much that mattered to them of their distinctive institutions and lifestyles. This was possible because the "acculturation" operated not on the basis of doctrinal uniformity, nor of enduring political unification (i.e., a historically constituted nation with a continuous existence), nor through the atomisation of Newar society into (supposedly equivalent and autonomous) "individuals" as in the modern West, but through the generalised endorsement of a shared symbolic framework that regulated communal life and determined the system of values. The uncontainable polyvalence of these symbols favoured unity-in-diversity.

Can we meaningfully characterise Newar religion, especially at the wider communitarian level and in its socio-political dimension, as being profoundly "Hindu"? Rather than allow the very object of our study to evaporate simply because it does not fit our preconceived reductive categories, it is our modes of analysis that need to be adapted to account for and do justice to the self-representations of the subjects who have "constructed" this system of relations. Formal Vedic sacrifices were practiced during the Licchavi period and have left their symbolic imprint on place-names, cults to various deities like those of Indra and of Pachali Bhairava, "national" festivals, organisation of the pantheon, royal mythology, and other aspects of Newar life, despite the intervening obscurity of the Transitional Period. Within this frame of reference, yet side-by-side and overflowing beyond its core practices, there developed a pantheon of Hindu gods, who were anchored across space and time, networked through multiple sanctuaries with their officiating priests and set into regular motion through the seasonal rhythms of public festivals. What re-emerges to the gaze of the anthropologist-historian after the apparent disintegration of this "Vedic" culture during the Transitional Period, is a generalisation and bewildering proliferation of the original symbolic universe, even without any explicit or self-conscious reference to a narrowly defined "Vedic" tradition. These developments opened the religious representations to alternative, even contesting, Buddhist and particularised local (re)interpretations, even while ensuring thereby that these "sub-systems" remained, and became even more firmly, integrated within the encompassing semiotic system. These "non-Hindu" specialists did not merely "appropriate" large swathes of this symbolic geography; they became, in their own way, ardent propagators of a "life-support system" that was never experienced as alien. It is in this sense that the Newar lives within a "Hinduised" universe: whether he represents himself entirely as Buddhist or rather as a Jyapu (farmer) faithful to the ancestral traditions, regardless of their religious veneer, of his "caste," the Newar cannot help but participate, directly or indirectly, in this semiotic system that provides a unifying frame of reference for all that is distinctive about his immediate polity and, beyond that, his larger Himalayan "ethnicity." The "trans-national" outlook that "Hinduism," understood as a semiotic system, had conferred on Newar self-representation is reflected in the extent to which enduring links, both symbolic

and institutional, have been cultivated with (even South) India (Madhes).[37]

The otherwise inexplicable "irregularities" that we have noted in and around the cult of Pachali Bhairava may be understood as historical precipitates, falling into the, as it were, "predetermined" slots of such a broad-based logic of religious acculturation. Instead of simply formulating an abstract model – based on an inevitably selective use of disparate historical and ethnographic data – of the religio-cultural dynamics underlying the relationship between Hinduism and Buddhism, we have sought, simultaneously, both to apply and demonstrate the same through a coherent, systematic and comprehensive decipherment of its "sedimentation" in the cult of this specifically Newar divinity localised in the south of Kathmandu. While providing an empirical "test" of the acculturation paradigm, this hermeneutic exercise suggests, conversely, that the "mindless syncretism" of the Newars does indeed obey a rigorous, though implicit, logic that has a rationality of its own. A ritual framework that involves the cooperation of such a diversity of social actors has been able to hang together despite the vicissitudes of history, and has symbolically anchored itself into the spatio-temporal universe of the whole Kathmandu Valley. It is therefore incumbent upon any would-be detractors of this model to offer an alternative framework that does sufficient (if not equal) justice to all that we know today of Pachali Bhairava and his links to other places, times and divinities. We have attempted to steer a mid-course between two opposed approaches to the study of religious phenomena in historical perspective, perspectives that nevertheless collude with each other in driving a wedge between "elite" self-representation and the lived reality of "common" folk, a dichotomy that is fraught with long-term consequences for the "cultural politics" of the social groups under study that may be gullible enough to appropriate these alien and divisive categories of thought. The "anthropological" approach tends to minimise the role of "elite" self-representation as expounded in canonical texts and would deduce from ethnographic data that Buddhism (and subsequently Indian Islam) is polytheistic, caste-based, world-affirming, and, in short, indistinguishable from Hinduism. When it does not simply turn away from such "degenerate" and "syncretic modes" of religious life, the "text-based" approach of the "classicist" would, for its part, prefer to focus on the "true" Buddhism or "Hinduism" as expounded, debated and refined by the literati, philosophers and theologians like the polyglot Vasubandhu or our Abhinavagupta.[38] The "dialectical" approach outlined here refuses to sacrifice either pole, and is instead intent on understanding how self-representations and lived reality have not only remained in constant (and, on the whole, productive) tension but have interacted mutually within a spiralling movement, the underlying

[37] For example, the primary officiants of the royal cult at the national shrine of Pashupatinath have always been and continue to be Bhatta priests from Karnataka in South India (currently being studied by Axel Michaels and Nutan Dhar Sharma). Hindu "kingship" was primarily a symbolic institution that had little in common with and, indeed, seems to have impeded the development of modern nationalism that has been able to assert itself only through a process of reduction.

logic of which was that of the gradual integration of disparate social groups within an overarching shared religious culture. It would seem that "Hinduism" had "from the beginning" (see n33) been a semiotic process defined by such an orientation that has not just accommodated, but actively encouraged the symbiosis of multiple, even conflicting, practices, doctrines and religions. In all likelihood, the Newars were not so much a unitary race that first underwent Buddhist influences, then gradually adopted Hindu culture, but rather a mixed population that became a recognisably distinct "ethnicity" through such acculturation.

But other religious traditions too have their own complex and evolving semiotic systems and, like Christianity, have come to encompass alien populations and even absorb entire cultures. The traditional Jewish problematic of the Other and the contemporary American "melting-pot" model of "multiculturalism" might perhaps serve as foils that offer a distinctive handle on what we mean by an "acculturation model of Hinduism." In its most banal sense, acculturation is typically something that simply "happens" when different (even hostile) communities are juxtaposed in time and place and begin to interact with each other; hence, no religious tradition can escape the transformative power of its immediate surroundings as evidenced by the varied evolution of the Abrahamic tradition(s) as conditioned by time, space and general (desert, rural, urban, industrial, humanist, postmodern, etc.) mentalities. Nevertheless, Judaism was predicated on the vigilant opposition between the community of believers, who wholeheartedly submit to the unique universal transcendent God, and its polytheistic neighbours, who posed the constant risk of contamination to the traditional faith and practice. The "election" of Israel was understood not as some intrinsic superiority of the Jew over the Gentile, but as a reflection of the subservience of the former to a universal ideal that was to be a "light unto the nations," a messianic burden from which it would be relieved only at the end of times. The "inner conflict" of Judaism consists precisely in the tension between the universalising ideal and the separatist attitude that would be the historical prerequisite for its conservation and eventual realisation when the messiah does indeed arrive. Acculturation, in such a (for example,

[38] When in the early 1980s Elizabeth began extending her field-work on Bhairava to the Kathmandu Valley, Nepal (falling under Himalayan Studies) and India (Elizabeth belonged then to a research team on Tantra directed by André Padoux) were the provinces of entirely separate research institutions in France that hardly worked together on such questions. This was not simply because of the tension between anthropologists and textual scholars, an opposition that was already being broken down under the impact of the monumental work of Louis Dumont and Madeleine Biardeau, but because Indologists felt that Newar practices, if they happened to know something of them, were somehow "all mixed up," whereas ethnographers felt it convenient to work under the overall assumption that the categories of classical India were less relevant for Nepal. When Prof. Corneille Jest learned, when we happened to run into him on our first visit to Kathmandu, that we were attempting an empirical and theoretical synthesis of the two domains, he encouraged Elizabeth to join the Himalayan Studies group whose direction had been taken over from him not too long ago by G. Toffin. It is an eloquent testimony to the fruitfulness of the direction of inquiry undertaken in this paper that it has been taken up in earnest and very systematically by the multidisciplinary research project at the University of Heidelberg. For example, many of the German contributors (anthropologists, Sanskritists, geographers, historians, architects, etc.) to their forthcoming volume on *Visualizing Space* (2004) in Benares (which also contains our paper extending this acculturation model to Hindu-Muslim syncretism) have previously worked (and even lived) in Nepal.

Greco-Roman) context, was fraught with danger for it not only exposed the Jew to seductive foreign modes of thought and practice (such as philosophy and idolatry), but also provided a fertile climate for radical reinterpretations, such as Christianity, that could threaten to implode the traditional edifice from within. The problematic relation to the Other in the Abrahamic legacy becomes acutely apparent in today's impasse where the same "ethnocentric" universalism, since incarnated (and, as it were, plebianised) and generalised in Islam, insists with even greater vehemence on the line that separates the *umma* (community of believers) from those beyond the pale. Even Christianity that, in principle, individualised faith and dissolved the religious law – and may likewise be understood as playing a mediating role between Jew and pagan similar to that played by Buddhism between brahmin and tribal – never really escaped this founding and inherited opposition between Jew and Gentile whose lines were simply redrawn around the "sacrificial" figure of Christ. Ongoing and inevitable cultural contacts (e.g., the exposure to Judaeo-Christian monotheism) may well have triggered these schismatic developments (e.g., adoption of Islam by the pagan Arabs) but it could hardly be said that the intentionality encoded into these Abrahamic religious systems was the acculturation of neighbouring communities. "Hinduism" with its internalisation of the (transgressive) Other (Bhairava) can only be understood, on the contrary, as a semiotic process that was entirely driven by and orientated towards acculturation.[39]

But what of acculturation in the modern context, where the secular domain – with its own inherent, shared and levelling dynamism – offers a neutral and privileged space for the mutual encounter, mingling and inevitable transformation of conflicting faiths? In the "melting-pot" of contemporary (especially American) society, for example, the "individual" is for the most part free to mix and match his preferred food, attire, political engagements, religious beliefs, and so on, from a wide palette of choices made available by its diverse ethnic components within a (founding, continuous and still) dominant (White Anglo-Saxon Protestant – WASP) culture. Finding themselves in a new, complex and unprecedented situation, defined above all by disruptive/enabling thresholds in both the material conditions and the ideological contours of the adopted homeland, immigrant communities and their religious representations are compelled to undergo a continuous process of self-redefinition, not just to attract and retain adherents but even to ensure their very survival within a competitive milieu imbued with "foreign" values and aspirations. Of course, such a state

[39] The comparison is actually more complex because the classical brahmins (with their isolative insistence on purity and adherence to Vedic orthodoxy) occupy a role that is in many ways analogous to that of observant Jews (as a "nation of priests"). However, their material dependence on the rest of Hindu society (not just protection and immunity from the king), including and especially the untouchables, and their participating in and taking custody of the wider symbolic universe that envelopes even their polar opposite prevents us from clinching this parallelism with orthodox Jews bound by the legalism that later came to be embodied in the Talmud. The most striking consequence of this contrast is that a radically Tantric brahmin, like Abhinavagupta, ends up being transformed into a "super-Hindu" of sorts, whereas an overtly transgressive Kabbalist, like Sabbatai Zevi or Jakob Frank, is cast out of the tradition as a heretic.

of affairs would have been inevitable in the case of both Hindu-Buddhist interaction in ancient India and, more recently, with respect to Hindu-Muslim acculturation (as reflected, for example, in the furor about conversions). A corresponding "neutral" ground would also have existed in the subcontinent whose model would have been provided especially by the "secularising" milieu of the court and as reflected in the profane face of Indian kingship (so emphasised by Louis Dumont). The royal circles (such as that of Jayapida in late eighth-century Kashmir) nurtured prolific trans-sectarian production in aesthetics, philosophy and even Tantra or often provided the spiritual impetus and material incentive for the same. However, unlike the modern "separation of church and state" that insists on excluding (at least overt) religious representations from the common public sphere, the "secular" in the classical Indian context was rather a privileged space wherein divergent, and even conflicting, sectarian commitments could fruitfully engage, explore, and challenge each other on a more or less level playing field. By ensuring his trans-sectarian status, it could be argued, the sacred (and even transgressive) dimension of the (god) king, as the fulcrum of a sacrificial model of society, would have only reinforced this (outwardly) "secular" aspect of the royal function as a catalyst of socio-religious acculturation. The Indian solution to the problem of ethnic diversity and religious pluralism was not a "humanism" that would make Man the least common denominator and measure of all things, but a "divine-centredness" that encouraged multiple kaleidoscopic *darshanas* (views) of what lay beyond human perception (and even comprehension). The three interlocking frameworks we have attempted to recover in the Newar cult of Pachali Bhairava – Shamanism, Buddhism and Vedism – are all built around and geared towards transcendence. Though Bhairava, like the newly arrived immigrant-refugee to the Promised Land, appears to "Hinduised" society as the Outsider in human guise, this terrifying embodiment of Abhinavagupta's Anuttara (Absolute) remains at heart as unspeakably and unrepresentably Other as the God of Moses (and of Sabbatai Zevi).

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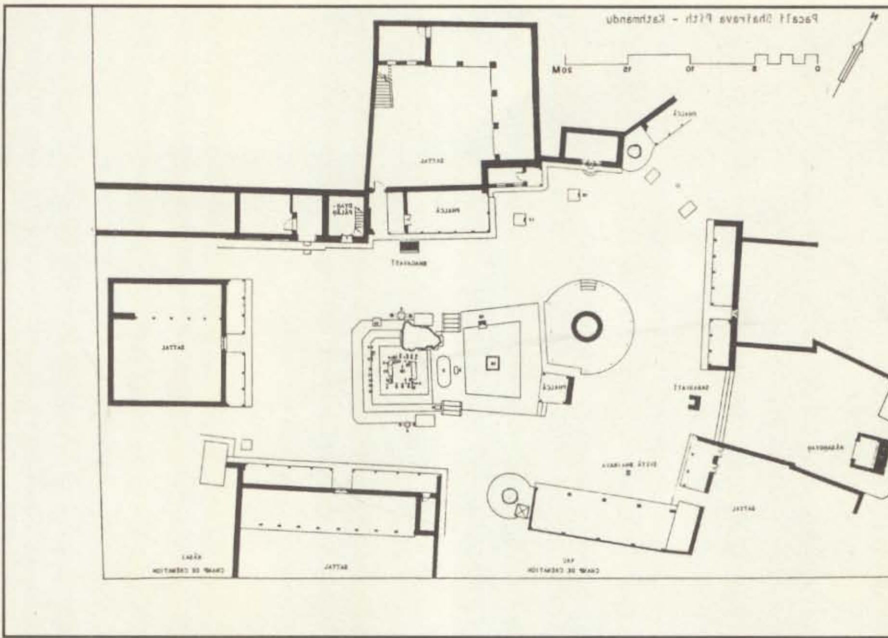
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Map 1. Details of shrine within *pitha* (open sanctuary) of Pachali Bhairava.





Maps by Niels Gutshow

Map 2. Procession routes during the annual festival of Pachali Bhairava: (1) The Juju's house (Bhimsen quarter); (2) *Pitha* of Pachali Bhairava; (3) *Dyahche* of Pachali Bhairava 1975-1976; (4) *Dyahche* of Pachali Bhairava 1976-1977.

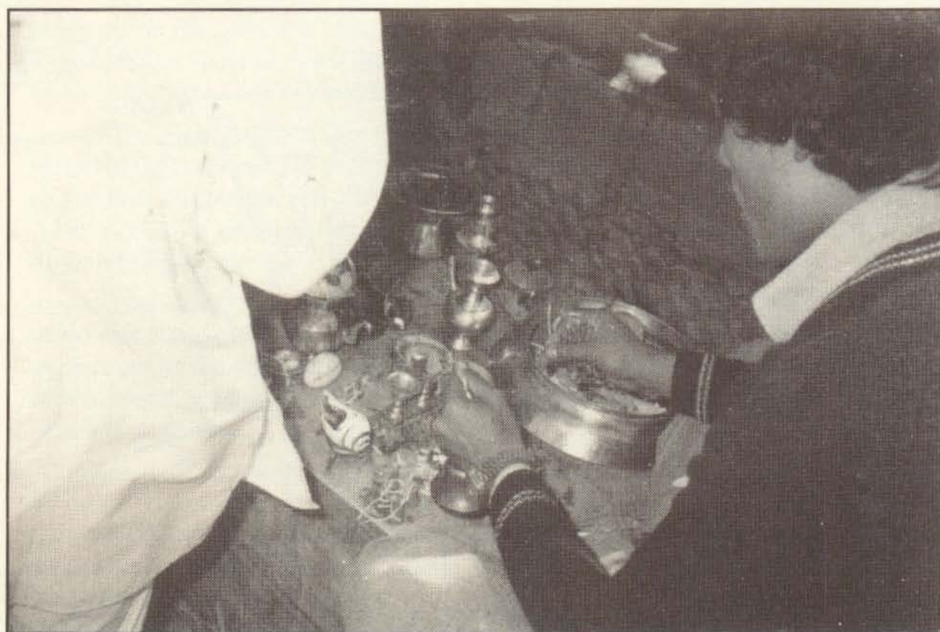
Map 3. The principal sites relating to the cult of Pachali Bhairava in Kathmandu.



Pic. 1 The Vetala in the *pitha* receiving sacrifice of poultry.



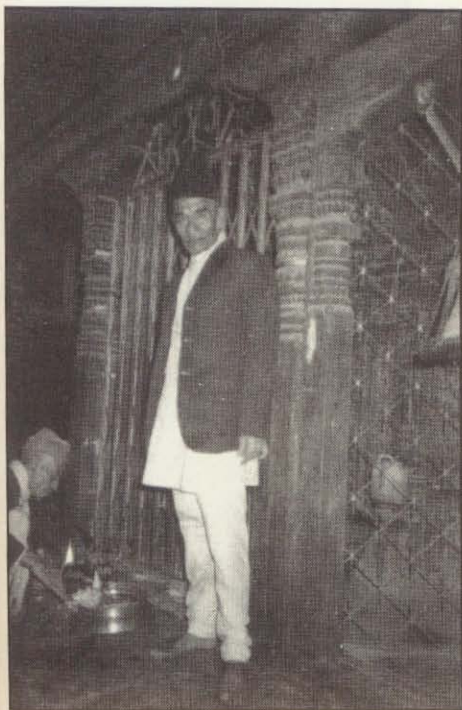
Pic. 2 The bronze jar with the encrusted image of Pachali Bhairava seated, like Svacchanda Bhairava, on a prostrate corpse.



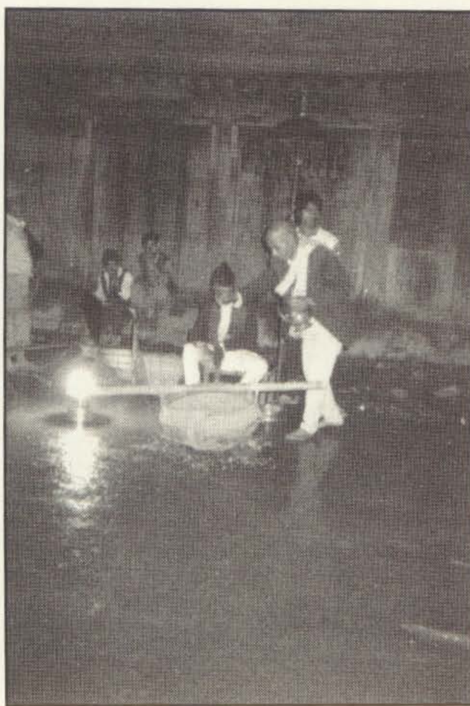
Pic. 3 Vajracharya, with bell in left hand, performing ritual at Pachali Bhairava *pitha*.



Pic. 4 *Thakali* (elder) with shaved head and robed in white, warming himself beside perpetual fire at the *pitha* of Pachali Bhairava.



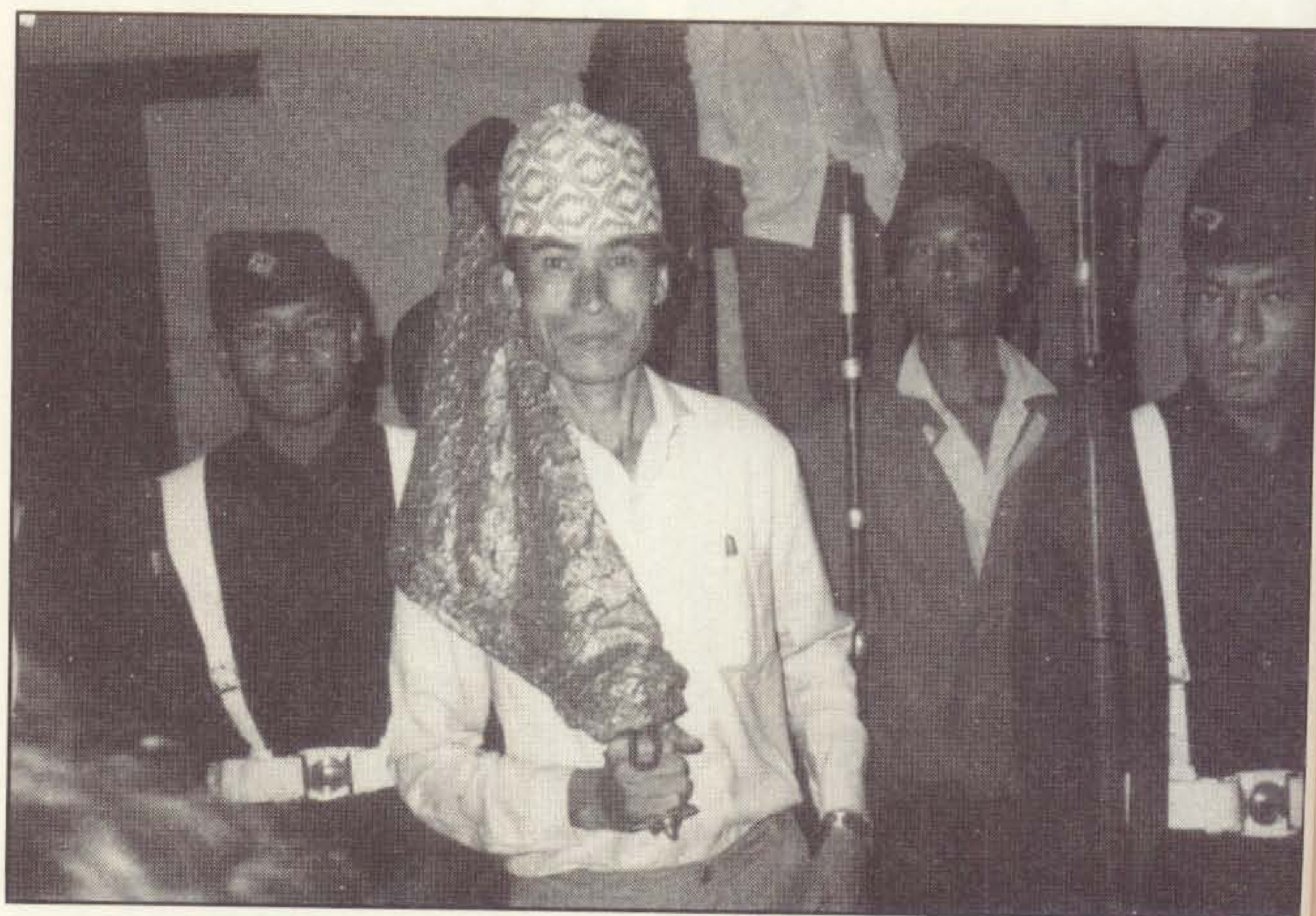
Pic. 5 Seated Karmacharya performing *Puja* before the closed gate of the Atko Narayan temple for the Juju, standing for his photo.



Pic. 6 Karmacharya performing *kasi puja* for the Juju seated in front of the *kasi* (brass vessel), while the two porters look on.



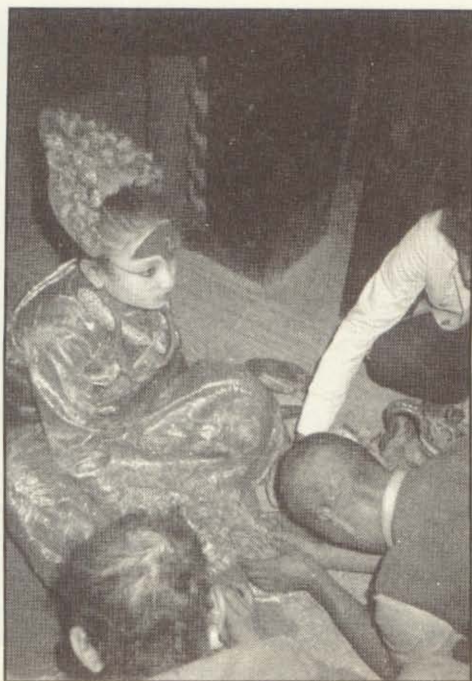
Pic. 7 Ganesha (Purna Bahadur) sacrificing a goat in his arms before the sacrificial fire.



Pic. 8 Gorkha infantry, in traditional (black) military uniform, escorting the King's sword into the Pachali Bhairava *pitha*.



Pic. 9 Ajima, dressed in black, carries the *patra khola* against his/her chest, while in a state of trance.



Pic. 10 Veneration of Kumari (Virgin-Goddess), draped as always in red, during the procession before Hanuman Dhoka.



Pic. 11 [Tej Ratna Tamrakar: taken on 4th October 1987]. Bhairava (Malakar), standng on the Bhuteshvara-stone, exchanges his reddened sword with the King, under the supervision of the Vajracharya (black hat) and the guru of the Malakar dancers (white turban).



Pic. 12 [Tej Ratna Tamrakar]. Bhairava (Malakar), leads the Nava Durga dances in the courtyard of Nasa Cok within the old Malla Palace at Hanuman Dhoka.



Pic. 13 Arrival of the Pachali Bhairava jar before Hanuman statue beside the palace-gate.



Pic. 14 [Nabina Rajbandari: taken on Vijayadashami 1991] Bhadrakali (Malakar), dressed in blue (like Bhairava), prepares to exchange her reddened sword with the King of Nepal, under supervision of Badri Ratna Vajracharya (wearing black hat) and the guru of the Malakar dancers (wearing white turban), at the Simha-dvara.

Samvada as a Literary and Philosophical Genre: An Overlooked Resource for Public Debate and Conflict Resolution?[1]

Laurie L. Patton

THE MEANING OF *SAMVADA* has the usual delights of Sanskrit lexicography, albeit in a mild form. One of its earliest occurrences is in the *Rig Veda*, where the poet asks Mitra and Varuna to defend him from the one "who has no pleasure in questioning, nor in repeated calling, nor in dialogue": *na yaḥ saṃpṛche na punar havītave na saṃvādāya ramate* (RV 8.101.4ab). The Brahmanas can use the term to mean "bargain" (*Satapatha Brahmanas* 9.5.2.16). The *Dharmasutras* (*Baudhayana Dharmasutra* 2.2.79) use it to mean conversation, discussion, or dialogue, which are the word's more "common" meaning. In the *Yuddhakanda* of the *Ramayana*, *samvada* means an "account, incident story" (6.125.8). The *Mahabharata* continues in this semantic range, only with the added connotation of dispute, ironically enough, in the *Shanti Parvan* (12.235.14). In Mimamsa, it means its opposite, "agreement," or "accord" (cf. Shabara 1.3.11; 1.4.22); so too in the *Tantravartika* (1.2.22; 1.2.47) and the Jain text of the *Prabandhachintamani* (52.4).

In addition to being a word, *samvada* also seems to function as a discrete, if not strictly bounded, genre. We hear the term *samvada* used all the time in reference to the *Bhagavadgita*, where it is described as

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[1] I want to note at the outset that, in thinking about conflict resolution, I consider *samvada* a genre that can provide certain restraints and "brakes" on the escalation of a dispute. At its very best form, *samvada* involves a face-to-face conversation, and an acknowledgement of the participants' positive contributions to the issues at hand, no matter what the disagreement between the parties is. This is the case with all of the *samvadas* discussed here. Even printed scholarly debate has an aspect of *samvada*, with the restraints of editors and outside readers to correct errors of fact, half-truths, readings taken out of context, innuendos, and other forms of writing which are not conductive to civil public debate. I consider the debates on the Web of recent years to be the opposite of *samvada* for two reasons. First, studies have shown that "flaming" or rage-filled posting of messages is far more frequent on the Web because there is no "brake" of face-to-face contact where the usual rules of personal interaction would apply. See Roger Clarke's "Net-Ethiquette." Also see Patricia Wallace, *The Psychology of the Internet*. One can post from "in-hiding," and engage in what I might call "sniper-style" pseudo-debate. Second, despite the presence of list-moderators, there are very few built-in correctives on the truth-content or tone of the postings. And any attempts to change or correct factual inaccuracies presented in such Web conversations are subject to a barrage of angry "flamers." In effect, Web "conversations" happen in real time, with unprecedented distribution around the globe, with no human contact and no social "brakes" which would curb both tone and factuality. This situation is basically undermining of the dignity of social intercourse, which is the basis of *samvada*.

a *samvada* between Nara and Narayana, as well as Arjuna and Krishna (BG 18.74, 76). The term is used by the Anukramanis and other late Vedic texts to describe certain Vedic hymns. It is used in the introduction (*Adi Parvan* 1.2.45, 1.2.125, and passim) of the *Mahabharata* to name certain dialogues, such as that harmonious exchange between Draupadi and Krishna's wife, Satyabhama, to be discussed below. It is also used by Shankara to name certain dialogues in the Upanishads; in fact, it is used by the Upanishads themselves to name certain dialogues between teacher and pupil within its own tradition.

The brief examples I will be using here are named as *samvada* by early and classical Hindu texts themselves, and thus might constitute what we call an indigenous genre. Certainly *samvada* does not have a tradition of criticism behind it as *kavya* does, or as classical schools of philosophy do. But one might suggest here that it is never too late to start one.

I want to add a note here about multiplicity of meanings. I am following Elizarenkova's helpful treatment of polysemy in the *Rig Veda*, articulated in her 1995 work, *Language and Style of the Vedic Rishis* (29-105). In her chapter on vocabulary, she builds upon a basic insight of Renou's about the ambiguity of vocabulary in the *Rig Veda*, and argues that certain words have "converse" meanings, depending upon their context. The word *prishtha* (back), for instance, can mean a physical back, but it can also mean a ridge, as in a ridge of a mountain, or the vault, as in the vault of a sky. Thus, depending on the context, the "back" of something can also mean the "top" of something, such as when we look at a ridge or a vault. (This is also called semantic bifurcation.) She also argues this case for certain verbs, the meaning of which changes depending upon whether it is the gods or the worshippers who are the subjects of the verb. What is more, as in the case of "back" above, the primary meanings are usually implied, or somehow bound up with, the secondary meanings in various creative ways (37).Thus, for Elizarenkova, polysemy is non-accidental; rather it is a change of meaning depending upon the context.

So too, I think it prudent to assume that the various "converse" meanings of *samvada* might imply each other in various creative ways. We might take its primary meaning to mean "speech together," but its various secondary meanings – dispute, agreement, accord, acrimonious or harmonious dialogue – as implying each other in the complex category that is *samvada.*

Dialogue Between Vishvamitra and the Rivers (RV 3.33)[2]

Let us turn now to look at some examples before putting them in a larger, analytic frame of conflict mediation, which I hope to do at the end of the paper.

Let us begin with Vishvamitra's dialogue with the rivers, one of about three or four Vedic hymns called by the various Anukramanis and other indices a *samvada*.

This dialogue is an old and very creative hymn. As the story goes, the *Rig Veda* (3.33) delights in the play between the life-giving waters and the ambitious rishi, Vishvamitra, with Sudas, as the family priest, was returning home with a great deal of wealth when he came to the Vipash and Shutudri. The rivers are so swollen they are uncrossable.

Vishvamitra

1. Rushing from the heart of the mountains, eager as two mares with reins loosened, contending, like two bright mother cows who lick, the Vipash and the Shutudri flow quickly with milk.
2. Impelled by Indra, whom you ask to push you, you move like chariots to the ocean. Flowing together, swelling with your waves, Bright Streams, each of you seeks the other.
3. To the most maternal river I went, to the auspicious, wide Vipash. Licking their calf, the two mothers flow onward to their common home together.

The Rivers

4. We two who rise and swell with billowy waters move forward to the home which Gods have made us. Our waters cannot be stopped when urged to motion. What the singer, calling to the Rivers?

Vishvamitra

5. Stay a little, at my friendly bidding rest, Holy Ones, a moment in your journey. With hymn sublime soliciting your favour, Kusika's son has called to the River.

The Rivers

6. Indra who wields the thunder dug our channels: he smote down Vritra, him who stayed our currents. Savitri, God, the lovely handed, led us, and at his sending forth we flow expanded.

Vishvamitra

7. That heroic deed of Indra must be lauded forever that he rent Ahi in

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2 1. *pra parvatānām uśatī upasthād aśve iva vṛ̀ṣite hāsamāne gāveva śubhrû mātarā rihāṇû vṛ̀pāṭ chutudrī payasā javete //*
2. *ṛ̀ndreṣite prasavam bhṛ̀kṣamāṇe achā samudraṃ rathṛ̀yeva yāthaḥ/ samārāṇû ūrmṛ̀bhiḥ pṛ̀nvamāne anyā vām anyām api eti śubhre //*
3. *achā sṛ̀ndhum mātṛtamām ayāsaṃ vṛ̀pāśam urvīṃ subhagām aganma/ vatsam iva mātarā saṃrihāṇùsamānamû yonim anu saṃcarantī //*
4. *enā vayam payasā pṛ́nvamānā anu ḹy niṃ devakṛtaṃ carantīḥ/ na vartave prasavaḥ sargataktaḥ kiṃyur vṛ̀pro nadṛ̀yo johavīti //*
5. *ramadhvam me vacase somiyāya ṛtāvarīr upa muhūrtam ùvaiḥ/ pra sṛ̀ndhum achā bṛhatī manīṣā avasyur ahve kuśikasya sūnuḥ //*
6. *ṛ̀ndro asmām̐ aradad vajrabāhur apāhan vṛtram paridhṛ̀ṃ nadīnām/ devo anayat savitā supāṇṛ̀s tasya vayam uprasavû yāma urvīḥ //*
7. *pravācīyaṃ śaśvadhā vīrṛ̀yaṃ tad ṛ̀ndrasya karma yad ahiṃ vivṛśat/ vṛ̀ vajrena pariṣado jaghāna āyann āpo ayanam ichamānāḥ //*
8. *etad vaco jaritar māpi mṛṣṭhā ā yat te ghoṣān uttarā yugāni/ ukthûṣu kāro prati no juṣasva mā no nṛ̀ kaḥ puruṣatrā namas te //*
9. *o ṣu svasāraḥ kārave śṛṇota yayau vo dūrād anasā/ nṛ̀ ṣū namadhvam bhavatā supārā adhoakṣāḥ sindhavaḥ srotiyābhiḥ //*
10. *ā te kāro śṛṇavāmā vacāṃsi yayātha dūrād anasā rathena/nṛ̀ te naṃsai pīpiyānûva yḷṣā maryāyeva kanṛ̀yā śaśvacaṛ̀ te //*
11. *yad aṅga tvā bharatāḥ saṃtareyur gavyan grāma iṣita ṛ̀ndrajūtaḥ/ arṣād aha prasavaḥ sargatakta ā vo vṛṇe sumatṛ̀ṃ yajñṛ̀yānām //*
12. *atāriṣur bharatā gavyavaḥ sam abhakta vṛ̀praḥ sumatṛ̀ṃ nadīnām/ pra pinvadhvam iṣayantīḥ surādhā ā vakṣanāḥ pṛṇdhvaṃ yāta śībham //*
13. *ud va ūrmṛ̀ḥ śamyā hantu āpo yoktrāṇi muñcata/ māduṣkṛtau vṛ̀enasā aghniyau śūnam āratām //*

pieces. He struck down those who stood in his way with his thunder, and eager for their course forth flowed the waters.

The Rivers

8. Never forget your word, O singer, which future generations shall tell again. In your compositions, O bard, show us your compassion. Do not demean us amongst humans. Let there be honour to you!

Vishvamitra

9. List quickly, Sisters, to the rishi who comes to you from far away with car and wagon. Bow down low; be easy to cross; stay, rivers, with your floods below our axles.

The Rivers

10. We will listen to your words, O singer. With wain and car from far away you come. I bow down to you, like a woman nursing, like a maiden bending to embrace her lover.

Vishvamitra

11. As soon as the Bharata have crossed you, the warrior band, urged on and sped by Indra, then let your streams flow on in rapid motion. I ask your favour, you who are worthy of our honour.
12. The warrior host, the Bharata, fared over the singer, won the favour of the Rivers. Swell with your billows, hurrying, pouring out wealth. Fill your channels fully, and roll swiftly onward.
13. So let your wave bear up the pins, and you, O Waters, spare the thongs; And never may the pair of Bulls, harmless and sinless, waste away.

Vishvamitra begins by praising the rivers, comparing them to cows, and mothers (1-3). The rivers ask him what he wants (4) and he asks them to stop their crossing for a moment (5). They speak of their channels dug by Indra when he slew the dragon, of Savitri impelling them (6). Vishvamitra praises Indra (7), and the rivers remind him to remember his speech (8). Vishvamitra asks them to bow down as he has to come from afar with wagon and chariot (9). The rivers acquiesce, like a mother nursing her child or a maiden bending to embrace a man (10). Vishvamitra promises them, and asks that the Bharatas and other armies be allowed to pass (12-13). He then blesses them; "let your waves so flow that the pin of the yoke may be above their waters, leave them exempt from misfortune or defect, showing no increase" (13).

Here, we have a dialogue that involves the interest of the rishi in crossing the river. He praises the river in many different ways in the first few verses, and when asked by the rivers to state his interest, he does so clearly in verse 5. The rivers state their own interests in being part of the gods' plan, particularly Indra and Savitri in verses 5 and 6. Vishvamitra states his own shared interest in Indra's favour by praising him in verse 7. The rishi finally persuades them when he reminds them of the distance he has travelled, and the rivers acquiesce. A very important note here: the situation is not resolved simply momentarily, though, but is seemingly a negotiation for all time: the rivers ask him to remember his speech, and Vishvamitra asks them to be equally accomodating to other people who wish to cross, such as the accompanying Bharata army. Finally, the accord is sealed with a blessing from Vishvamitra.

Balaki and Ajatashatru's Engagement

The next *samvada*, or dialogue, is a wonderful one from the Upanishads (*Kaushitaki Upanishad* 4.1-20).[3]

1. Now, Gargya Balaki was a learned and widely travelled man, who had lived in the land of Ushinara, in the land of Satvan and Matsya, in the land of Kuru and Panchala, and in the land of Kashi and Videha. Once he visited Ajatashatru, the king of Kashi, and said to him: "let me tell you a formulation of truth (*brahman*)." Ajatashatru replied: "We'll give you a thousand cows! At a speech such as that, people are sure to rush here, shouting: 'Here's a Janaka! Here's a Janaka!'"
2. The great in the sun; the food in the moon; the radiance in the lightning; the sound in thunder; Indra Vaikuntha in the wind; the full in space; the irresistible in the fire; the truth in the waters – that was with respect to the divine sphere. Next, with respect to the *atman* (body) – resemblance in a mirror; companion in a shadow; life in an echo; death in a sound; Yama in a dream; Prajapati in the body; [the essence] of speech in the right eye; [the essence] of truth in the left eye.
3. Balaki then said: "It is that person in the sun that I venerate" (*Evaiṣa āditye puruṣas tam evāham upāsa iti*). Ajatashatru replied: "Don't drag me into a discussion about him! (*Taṃ hovācājātaśatrur mā maitasmin samvādayiṣṭāḥ*!) I venerate him only as the most eminent of all beings, as their head. Anyone who venerates him in this way will become the most eminent of all beings, he will become their head."
4. Balaki then said: "It is that person in the moon that I venerate." Ajatashatru replied: "Don't drag me into a discussion about him! (*Taṃ hovācājātaśatrur mā maitasmin samvādayiṣṭāḥ*!) I venerate him only as Soma, the great king dressed in white, the essence (*atman*) of food. Anyone who venerates him in this way will become the essence of food."

4.4-18. This same procedure was repeated, with each element of veneration Balaki suggested only being, in Ajatashatru's view, a very essential part of Brahman, but not the whole of it.

4.19-20. Balaki fell silent; Ajatashatru asked if that is all, and Balaki replied, yes. Ajatashatru then said, "Truly, do

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[3] *Kaushitaki Upanishad* 4.1-4 (For reasons of space, I have given only exemplary verses and summed up the rest of the debate. Translation is based, with tiny modifications, on Patrick Olivelle, *The Early Upanishads* 255-61.)

4.1. *atha ha vai gārgyā bālākir anūcānaḥ saṁspṛṣṭa āsa/ so 'vasaduśīnareṣu satvan matsyeṣu kurupañcāleṣu kāśivideheṣv iti //*

sa hājātaśatruṃ kāśyamābrajyovāca brahma te bravānīti/ taṁ hovācājātaśatruḥ sahasraṃ dadmasta ity etasyāṃ vāci janako janaka iti vā u janā dhāvantīti //

2. *āditye bṛhañ candramasyannaṃ vidyuti tejaḥ stanayitnau śabdo vāyāvindro vaikuṇṭha ākāśe pūrṇmagnau viṣāsahirityapsu satyam ity adhidaivatam/athādhyātman/ ādarśe pratirupaścchāyāyāṃ dvitīyaḥ pratiśrūtkāyāmasur iti śabde mṛtyuḥ svapne yamaḥ śarīre prajāpatir dakṣiṇe 'kṣiṇi vācaḥ savye 'kṣiṇi satyasya //*

3 *sa hovāca bālākir ya evaiṣa āditye puruṣas tam evāham upāsa iti/ taṁ hovācājātaśatrur mā maitasmin saṃvadayiṣṭhāḥ/ atiṣṭhāḥ sarveṣāṃ bhūtānāṃ mūrdhati vā aham etam upāsa iti/ sa yo haitam evam upāste 'tiṣṭhāḥ sarveṣāṃ bhūtānaṃ mūrdhā bhavati//*

4 *sa hovāca bālākir ya evaiṣa candramasi puruṣas tam evāham upāsa iti/ taṁ hovācājātaśatrur mā maitasmin saṃvadayiṣṭhāḥ/ bṛhanpāṇḍaravāsāḥ somo rājānn asyātmeti vā aham etam upāsa iti/ sa yo haitam evaṃ upāste 'nnasyātmā bhavati// ...*

not vie with me in a discussion for no purpose," saying, "let me tell you a formulation of Brahman" (*Mṛṣā vai khalu mā saṃvādayiṣṭā, brahma te bravaṇīti*). It is the one who is the creator of the person who have talked about, whose creation they are, that one should seek to know (*Mṛṣā vai khalu mā saṃvādayiṣṭā, brahma te bravaṇīti yo vai bālāka eteṣām puruṣāṇām kartā yasya vai tat karma sa vai veditavya iti*).

Balaki then came with firewood, to be taken as the king's pupil; the king replied that it is *pratiloma* (against custom) for a king to be a teacher of a Brahmin, but invited him to come along, wanting to make sure that Balaki perceived it clearly (*ehi – tv eva tvā jñ apayiṣāmīti*). He then delivered a teaching about the *hita*, or veins, that become unified with breath, sight, hearing and so on. For him, the *atman* consists of intelligence, and penetrates all things. The other *atmans* cling to the larger *atman*, consisting of intelligence, like a people to their chieftain. When Indra knew this, he conquered the self and all beings.

This conversation, too, is not some chance encounter, but rather a negotiation, in which there are several issues at stake immediately, thrown on the table to be resolved: Balaki's reputation as a wise person and a teacher; the nature of Brahman itself, and Balaki's formulation of it. Ajatashatru, in turn, wants nothing of it. He does not want each "person" that Balaki introduces into the conversation to be part of the conversation at all. It is ironic that, like it or not, Ajatashatru has created a *samvada* in his not wanting to have a *samvada*. And thus, like Vishvamitra's dialogue with the rivers, the ending, or resolution, also has a somewhat permanent quality to it: *you* tell me what the real teaching is, says Balaki, and so the king does.

Dialogue Between Draupadi and Satyabhama (*Vana Parvan* 3.222.1-57)

Let us turn now to our third example of *samvada*, the colloquy of Draupadi and Satyabhama, also known as Satya (*Vana Parvan* 3.[38] 221-23). What follows is a basic summary of the encounter: Krishna has come to visit with his wife, Satyabhama, as they are dwelling in the forest. The visit occurs after the adventures of Arjuna with Indra, and begins with reports on the doings of relatives. The sage Markandeya comes to visit, and launches on a series of discourses about the nature of time and the cycles of time, the *yugas*, and many other stories. In the midst of Markandeya and the Pandavas' discourse, Draupadi and Satyabhama retire to the back rooms, old friends who need to catch up. The text is summarised as follows:

222.1-57. Krishna's wife Satyabhama retires with Draupadi as the Pandavas discourse goes on. Satyabhama is curious as to how Draupadi keeps the attention of her husbands. How do you conduct yourself? She asks *kena Draupadī vṛittena; pāṇḍavān upatiṣṭhati* (4a) "How are they under your influence, and how are they never angry with you, lovely one?" *Katham ca vaśagās tubhyāṃ na kupyanti ca te śubhe* (4c). She wonders whether it is a prayer, or a fire oblation, or a drug, a special bath, a mantra, herbs.... "Tell me the great mystery of your power, so that through it, my Krishna is eternally well-disposed to me": *mama āvakṣva pāñcāli yaśasyaṃ bhagaved enam, yena kṛṣṇe bhaven nityaṃ mama kṛṣṇa vaśāanugaḥ* (7).

Draupadi begins her answer by telling Satyabhama that such methods are the ways of untruthful women, literally, "without *sat,*" *asatstrīṇām samācāram* (9a). She continues to Satyabhama, "Why should there be praise for the path travelled by the wicked? Such questions and uncertainties do not become you. You, the beloved queen of Krishna, have sense enough yourself":

> 9. *asat strīṇāṃ samācāraṃ satye māṃ anupṛcchasi/ asad ācarite mārge kathaṃ syād anukīrtanam //* 10. *anupraśnaḥ saṃśayo vā naitattvayyupapadyate/ tathā hyanupetā buddhyā tvaṃ kṛṣṇasya mahiṣī priyā //* (*Mahabharata* 3.222.9-10)

Draupadi goes on to launch a long reply, which includes the fact that such spells are ineffective, if not murderous (8-17); that selfless timely service, without misinterpretation of a gesture or a wrong word, a clear storeroom and palace, agreeability, directness, little time in the privy or in the gardens are essential (17-32); she has learned from her mother-in-law Kunti – the various kinds of sacrifices, presence at the new and full moon sacrifice (32-34). Draupadi's law rests on her husbands; they are the God and the path, and she never eats more or speaks more than they. She waits on and is obedient to Kunti (35-40); Draupadi then narrates the ways in which she waited on the guests of the palaces; ascetics who ate on golden plates; Kaunteya's hundred thousand slave girls, all of whose jewellery, ornaments and dresses she knew (40-48); she tackled the management of the household, the cowherds, the shepherds, the accounts of the treasury. Draupadi endures hunger and thirst, and the first to wake up, the last to lie down. Such conduct is her charm *(samvananam)*; yes, she knows how to put a charm on her husbands, and no, she does not practice the ways of untruth (56-57).

Satyabhama then replies with honour to Draupadi, who has exemplified the *dharmacharini* (law). As she replies, "I am with you, Panchali Yajnaseni, forgive me; for it is the way among women friends to speak loosely and laughingly" or *abhipannāsmi pāñcāli yājñaseni kṣamasva me – kāmakāraḥ sakhīnāṃ hi sopahāsaṃ prabhāṣitum.*

Draupadi responds with a final poetic reply, extolling the virtues of obedient married life, declaring that there is no god like a husband, thus Krishna should be worshipped by Satyabhama with all her heart; the chores should be done by her as a gesture of love; his friends invited to meals; she must keep company with the highest of women and wear the best of clothing as she is serving him (223.1-12).

224.1-14. As Satyabhama leaves Draupadi, she reassures her that no woman who is as ethical and righteous as she will find trouble for long (4-5). Her husbands will enjoy the earth, their lives no longer troubled by discord. The earth will rest on Yudhishthira, and the arrogant ones, the ones who did her ill, will lose their pride and depart for Yama's domain (5-9). All of her sons are happy, loved by Krishna's wives, and they are receiving tender care and good instruction (10-14). She and Krishna depart.

This is a fascinating *samvada* in many ways, and more complex than we have space to go into for the purposes of this article. But several issues need to be raised: first, at stake here is Satyabhama's wish to have Draupadi's secret for her own, as she is Krishna's chief queen. Her status as chief wife amongst other wives is in

converse relationship to Draupadi's status as sole wife amongst many husbands. Draupadi's response is what we might call "high *stridharma*" – that is, a long and rich illustration of the concept. She begins with images of murderous men and women who might use poisons or charms, as Satyabhama suggests, and then in contrast, continues with the tiny details of behaviour that constitute the really effective control over husbands: avoid laughing when there is no joke; do not tarry long in the privy or in the gardens; be a constant presence at the new and full moon offerings, next to the milk dish; bathe, dress, and feed Kunti; know the guests and the stables and the household details inside out. Draupadi's response is a poetic litany of self-sacrifice – this is the true charm (3.223.1-12).

The seal of the conversation comprises the end of the *samvada*, where Satyabhama comforts Draupadi, predicting victory for her god-like husbands. A woman of her good qualities cannot have trouble for long; those who mocked her will go to the land of Yama. Satyabhama ends by reassuring Draupadi that her sons by all the Pandava brothers are happily watched over by Krishna's wives, who love them as she does.

Dialogue Between Daksha and Sati (*Vayu Purana* 30.40-44)

One final short example of *samvada*, from the Puranas, is worth thinking through here. It occurs in the *Vayu Purana*, in a version of the Sati-Daksha story given there.

40-42. Because Shiva never bowed to his father-in-law, Daksha, he invited seven out of eight of his daughters, along with their husbands, to his home. He did not invite Sati out of hatred for Shiva. Sati goes to her father's house in order to inquire.

44-45ab. Sati speaks to Daksha: How have you dishonoured me in this horrible deed, by giving greater honour to your younger daughters? I am the best and eldest daughter. It is not worthy of you to be rude to me.

45cd-48 You are the best of my daughters, and are always worthy of my respect. Their husbands, too are always worthy of my respect. They are better in qualities and more deserving than Shiva. They are good ascetics, absorbed in Brahman, pious and great Yogins: Vasishtha, Pulastya, Arigiras, Pulaha, Kratu, Bhrigu and Marichi are very great.

49-50. Shiva, however, is my enemy. But you are his heart and soul, and he yours. You are devoted to him! Therefore I do not honour and welcome you. Daksha said this with a deluded mind – thus incurring a curse on himself and the great rishis he mentioned.

51. Spoken to in this way, Sati was infuriated and said, "Since you insult me, even as I have been pure in my speech, mind and acts, I throw away this body, which was born of you, Father."

52. Then, dejected and angered by the insult, the goddess Sati bowed to Shiva in her mind, and spoke:

53. I have not been deluded and have remained pious; wherever I am reborn in through another shining body, I will gain the status of the pious wife of Shiva and Shiva only.

54. She sat there with her self in yogic concentration. In her mind, she kept the powerful fire prayer (*ageneyi dharana*).

55. Because of the powerful fire prayer, fire burst out of all the limbs of her

body and was blown by the wind. It reduced her to ashes.

Sati is angry upon hearing that her father Daksha had invited all his daughters over to his home, with their husbands, with the exception of her, the most excellent oldest (1.30.43-44). Daksha has done this because of his hatred of Sati's husband, Shiva, who does not behave in any way like a son-in-law, and refuses to bow to him. He explains to Sati why he has committed this insult, as the text glosses, "with deluded mind" (47-50). Then Sati declares to her father: "Since you insult me, I who am pure, cast off this body" (51). She then declares that, in her future births, she will attain the status of Shiva's wife alone (53). With her self in yogic concentration, she keeps the *agneyi dharana* (fire prayer) with herself. As a result, fire comes out of all the limbs of her body, and thus blown by the wind, she is reduced to ashes (54).

While there is not a peaceful solution to this *samvada,* as in the others, there is a familiar pattern. Sati declares her interests, and Daksha responds with his. The resolution of Sati's anger is in direct response to the self-delusion of Daksha. She refuses to inhabit her body, which is born of Daksha. And all future bodies will be attached to Shiva. Like the three previous dialogues, this one ends with a statement about the way things ought to be, the rightness of a particular resolution. Note here that it is not harmony, but resolution, that is the issue.

Samvada: A Constructive Analysis

The value of these *samvadas* can be assessed, of course, as a compositional device – to move an epic or Puranic plot along; to provide an occasion for the praise of a *deva* or rishi that may be used in a ritual environment, as we know is the case with the *ashvamedha*; to provide the frame for the gaining of Upanishadic wisdom, and so on. Yet here I want to remark that their general pattern resembles many contemporary perspectives of conflict negotiation (Fisher and William; Lederach; Gopin, *Between Eden and Armageddon* and *Holy War, Holy Peace*; Johnston).

The theories of conflict negotiation are as varied as the meanings of *samvada* – arbitration, litigation, mediation, both binding and non-binding, and so on. But the basics of conflict meditation involves a *structured* conversation, much like *samvada*. These consist of four distinct phases, none of which must be passed over, but worked through in clear and conscientious progression. The first phase is the statement of interests – where each party articulates what is at stake in their own view of the conflict. The second is accounting – where each party gives a full account of the conflict, its history and how the impasse arose. The third is the exploration of options to resolve the issue. Here, the goal is not to take irreversible positions prematurely. Rather, it is to give all possibilities free reign – all options are explored and imagined, no matter how far-fetched. (A typical pragmatic example that conflict negotiators use is, "Sure I could give you $1 million for that house, or I could give you $1." Neither possibility is condemned, just put on the table as an imaginative possibility.)

Finally, a resolution is agreed upon based on a narrowing down of the options imagined. The resolution includes both a way to alleviate damage, and a code of conduct for the future. It should be stressed here that the

resolution is NOT necessarily a reconciliation, but rather an agreement of what an appropriate response to the situation should be, in terms of the past, the present, and the future. One university mediation required the two young men involved to agree to leave the room if the other entered it, or cross to the other side of the street if the other was on the same sidewalk. This was, of course, not at all a harmonious reconciliation, but rather its opposite. But the two young men came up with it themselves, and struck to the letter of their agreement until graduation. It was not a reconciliation, but it was a resolution. In reading them through, it struck me forcefully that all of these *samvadas* contain some approximation of these elements in varying degrees – that there is a family resemblance between recent procedures of conflict mediation and the procedures outlined above. All four *samvadas* consist of an initial statement of what is at stake: Vishvamitra needing to cross, and the rivers needing to run their course; Balaki's needing to prove his knowledge of Brahman and Ajatashatru's needing to show the higher knowledge; Satyabhama's interest in finding out Draupadi's secret, and Draupadi's proving herself a model of womanly restraint and suffering; Sati's interest in being included as the oldest sister in the family, and Daksha's need to complete the counter-insult to Shiva.

Each *samvada*, too, contains a narration of past action. In the Vedic hymn, the rivers mention their past associations with Indra and Savitri. The *Kaushitaki Upanishad* stresses Balaki's reputation as a wise and well-travelled brahmin. The *Mahabharata* focuses on Draupadi's past harmony with her husbands before launching into the reasons for it. Finally, in the *Vayu Purana*, Shiva's insults to Daksha are narrated as the reason for the present impasse.

Most compellingly, we see rich illustrations of possible solutions to the tension in each *samvada*, what conflict mediators would call exploring options. The rivers give descriptions of what their cooperation might look like. Balaki with infinite patience and tolerance for insult, continues to suggest what the "person" might look like and where he might reside. Draupadi poetically describes various wifely responses to all manner of domestic situations. Sati declares taking leave of her body as the daughter of Daksha is one possible response to his insult.

Not all of these solutions are the ones arrived at by the interlocutors, nor are they all explored in a non-judgmental, accepting way that conflict negotiators in the 1970s, 80s, and 90s would advocate. Nonetheless, possible responses are stated and explored in the Sanskrit *samvadas*, and explored richly. I will return to this point below.

Finally, the resolution of the *samvada* involves a statement, or programme, for future action. The rivers accept and promise future cooperation with those who wish to cross, such as the Bharata armies. Ajatashatru ends the colloquy with a supreme teaching, even as he acknowledges that he should not as a kshatriya be the teacher. Satyabhama reassures Draupadi, and even predicts victory after she apologises for her impertinence. Finally, Sati predicts that in all future lives, she will always be the wife of Shiva, even as she abandons her earthly body in fire. As noted of the conflict mediations above, not all *samvada* resolutions are peaceful or harmonious. Certainly the *Vayu*

Purana's is not. Rather, it is the opposite: a resolution that will have repercussions of a cosmic nature, where the karmic working out of Sati's actions alone will provide the resolution to the conflict. Nor are all resolutions definite; certainly in the *Kaushitaki Upanishad* dialogue, the teaching is clear, but the ultimate relationship between Balaki and Ajatashatru is not. In the *Mahabharata*, Draupadi and Satyabhama's relationship is reconciled after minor tension, but the outcome of the Pandavas' exile is not.

It should be clear by now that my intention is not to say that *samvadas* existed as some kind of proto-theory of conflict meditation before Westerners got to it. Such a statement would be biased, ignorant, and incorrect. And I certainly hope we avoid such statements as they only sow the seeds of distortion we are trying to combat. As I have written and argued elsewhere, the terms "Indian" and "Western" are now frequently used in deterministic, biased ways masking as political correctness, and they should be avoided whenever possible (see Patton 805-16).

Rather I want to argue that *samvada* shares a great deal with conflict mediation theories about *structured conversation as the best response to disagreement*. And they are indigenous to classical Indian literature, and might well be of use as a resource for certain negotiations in the future. As I see it, *samvada*s differ from *purvapaksha/siddhanta* kinds of situations in that they arise not out of intellectual argument, or philosophical need, but rather out of all-too-human situations: the unfordability of a river; the longing to be the wisest teacher; the wish to be the best wife of a charmed husband; anger at an existentially deep insult. It goes without saying that this, too, is the case with conflict negotiation.

In the last two decades, Indian leaders and thinkers have looked for models of Indian, or more specifically, "Hindu" identity. We see the search in the iconisation of Sanskrit, the revision of the high school curriculum; the debate over scholarly research and who might be allowed to come into the country to do what project; the reassertion of the meaning of Rama, the meaning of *yajna* or *yatra.* But we might also look for classical examples of pluralism. India could become a world example of successful, plural co-existence of ethnicities and religions, and it possesses a wealth of indigenous resources to think these issues through. Classical Sanskrit humanists such as C. Kunhan Raja began this project, in the service of a Gandhian view of what was possible for India (*Poet Philosophers of the Rig Veda* and *The Quintessence of the Rig Veda*). Even in his 90s, R. N. Dandekar continued to mine Sanskrit for models of human behaviour that cross disciplinary and ethnic lines. Gandhi himself used the *Gita*, the most obvious and well-known *samvada,* as his most inspirational classical text (see Agarwal).

Indeed, there is one aspect of *samvada* that would make a particular contribution to contemporary situations. Most of the dialogues examined above are imaginatively rich in exploring options to resolve a conflict – richer than most contemporary conflict meditation theories would have it. Draupadi's speech is perhaps the best example of such narrative detail – where, as an exploration of the possibilities of harmonious living with her husband, she specifies even such details as developing a knowledge of her guests' harem's jewellery and garments. Others, too, exhibit imaginative richness: in the *Kaushitaki Upanishad*,

Ajatashatru's specificity of how each "person" should be venerated is remarkable.

To be sure, theories of conflict negotiation make sure that the "account of the conflict" portion of the conversation, as well as the "exploring options" portion, is thorough. However, contemporary theories do not raise these parts of the conversation to the level of an art form in themselves as the *samvadas* clearly do. Thus, the narrative richness, and the almost poetic, contemplative quality of these parts of the dialogue might well be something helpful for contemporary mediators. Taking the time to formulate narratives well, as well as to explore options in a responsible, and creative way, is a clear strength of the Indian genre.

Moreoever, *samvada* is a pan-Indian concept, occurring in Buddhist, Jain and many other Brahmanical texts. The study of the word/genre will lend a whole new energy to the conversation across traditions. Finally, as Vidyut Aklujkar has noted, there is a small thread of women's dialogues called *samvada* which we would do well to look at. It may constitute an intriguing moment in Indian literary history (5n5).

Samvada is only one among many such indigenous genres that might be utilised in a pluralist democratic society as a way of thinking from the past that might help us in the future. (And for reasons argued in note 1, I view debates on the Web as the opposite of *samvada*; they are actually undermining of the human dignity and respect that *samvada* seems to imply.) As recent theologians and philosophers have also argued of David Hume's *Dialogues* (Tracy), *samvada's* dialogical nature means that, if it is used as a kind of hermeneutic, the risks of essentialism as well as ethnic and religious prejudice are less. Moreover, it can provide a kind of poetic and classical example of a progressive attitude toward problem-solving in many human situations. *Samvada* could act as a kind of imaginative map, an encouragement toward openness and the negotiation of difference. Whatever the culture or religious tradition, literature's inspiration and contribution should be exactly that.

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essay

Logic, Morals and Meditation: *Tarka, Dharma,* Yoga

Arindam Chakrabarti

> I will now close my eyes, plug my ears, and withdraw all my senses. I will rid my thoughts of physical objects – or, since that is beyond me, I shall write those images off as empty illusions. Talking with myself and looking more deeply into myself, I'll try gradually to know myself better.

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DON'T THESE LINES SOUND as if they are from some sort of an autobiography of a Yogi? Actually, as many of us may recognise, they are the opening lines of Descartes' Third Meditation (*Meditations on First Philosophy*). The coincidence becomes even more intriguing when one reads on. One of the alternative objects of meditation recommended by Patanjali in his *Yogasutras* is the idea of God – not quite a Christian creator God but a unique centre of consciousness, free from the bondage of karma and desires and afflictions, where the seed of omniscience reaches its highest conceivable perfection. This Third Meditation of Descartes also happens to focus on the concept of God, though a radically different concept than the one recommended by Patanjali. Yet, it would be shocking to both Western rationalist-modernists as well as to Eastern lovers of mystical wisdom to call Descartes an unwitting practitioner of Yoga! Descartes was a mathematician posing as a sceptic in his search for perfect certainty through purely logical reasoning and thereby laying the foundations of European scientific epistemology. What does that have to do with Eastern spirituality which is supposed to help us transcend all logical thinking and plunge us, instead, into an oceanic intuitive experience of God, self or nothingness? Nevertheless, the autobiographical account of how Descartes was preparing himself, after having stumbled upon the existence of the first person, for further philosophical discoveries sounds uncannily Yogic. Indeed, that description of withdrawal from all the external senses seems to echo the *Bhagavadgita*:

sarvadvarani samyamya, mano hrdi nirudhya ca,
murdhnyadhayatmanah pranam asthito yoga-dharanam (VIII.12)

Having restrained all the doors of one's body, and arresting the mind in one's heart, one practices the Yoga of steadfast concentration by gathering the entire vital force on the top of the cranium

A similar resemblance between the two traditions can be noticed with regard to the description of an ideal moral agent. When in the sixth chapter of the *Gita*, an ideal Yogi(n) is defined as one who looks upon others' pleasures and pains in analogy with his own pleasures and pains and sees everyone as equal, seeing everyone in his self and his self in everyone else, that description seems to correspond with Adam Smith's description of sympathy as the most important moral sentiment: "By the imagination we place ourselves in his situation, we conceive ourselves enduring all the same torments, we enter as it were into his body, and become in some measure the same person with him...." And yet, the popular image of Yoga-meditation, with all its emphasis on special postures and breathing techniques and levels of inward one-point focusing of the mind, with a certain kind of tranquility as its goal, has little to do with being fair or just in one's social conduct or empathising with or trying to alleviate the suffering of others around us. Yoga seems to be as amoral as it is anti-analytic or arational. But is it? The chief purpose of this paper is to investigate whether this popular image is correct, to inquire what exactly is the relation between Yogic meditation, logical discursive thinking or reasoning and practical moral virtues. My sense is that these three aspects of human perfection, so to say, somehow hang together.

The *Yogavasishtha*, a massive ninth century Sanskrit text originally called "Mokshopaya" ("The Way to Liberation"), vividly describes the co-presence of these three kinds of virtues in the ideal spiritually free-in-this-life person. Having achieved perfect tranquility of mind (literally having gone beyond the fluctuations of the mind simply through philosophical reasoning with oneself; being an out and out intellectual text, the *Yogavasishtha* looks down upon bodily or psychic Yoga through breath-control, etc.):

> The living liberated person laughs at the ways of the world, finding its pleasures insipid in the beginning, in the middle and in the end. Yet he does have fun in this world which he makes fun of. He avoids the extremes of anxiety or complacency in crises, he remains neutral between mutual enemies, he is always kind and generous. He does not get exhausted by the hectic affairs of his daily life. Outwardly he remains busy with a lot of initiatives in which he is efficient but at heart he is quiet and restful without any burning desires. He is polished, sweet-tempered, altruistic, and smiles before he talks. He is brave in battles and enjoys himself and entertains others with fresh sports, fun and games. He usually has mastery over many special sciences and is respected for his skill in debates and dialogues." (YV, Upasama (V) ch.18 and Nirvana (VI b), 170)

Of course this is too perfect to be actual. But the drift is clear: spiritual or broadly Yogic, perfection is supposed to make the philosopher socially urbane, ethically virtuous and also intellectually sharper. But how? What is the connection between the spiritual practice of inwardness and tranquility, moral character, and logical acumen?

Let me start by setting up a robust opposition which says there is no

connection whatsoever between them. The following types of considerations could be adduced in support of a claim of complete disconnect between Yoga, on the one hand, and analytical logical acumen or ethical excellence, on the other:

- Some people meditate regularly but are not very moral. Quite a lot of people display exemplary moral virtues in their lives but have no time for practicing meditation. From these facts we can conclude that meditation has nothing to do with morality, that calming the fluctuations of the mind through contemplative practice is neither necessary nor sufficient for being a good human being or doing the right thing.
- Similarly, lots of very clever, analytically rational and theoretically knowledgeable people show no inclination to meditate. And many who are good at arresting the flow of their restless minds by meditation seem to be bad reasoners and averse to analytical thinking. Such failures of correlation show that meditation has nothing to do with logical acumen or rational thinking and that it would be a bad pun to take Descartes' choice of the title *Meditations on First Philosophy* as a kind of concession to spiritual practice.

Perhaps the best positive case we can make for the practice of Yoga, if we concede that meditation has no impact on moral character and demands little reasoning or conceptual abilities, is that it helps us deal with our emotions. But how could we live with such a tritely tripartite picture of human nature where thinking and doing are so insulated from feeling that an emotionally balanced, quiet Yoga-adept could easily be intellectually dim or ethically debased? Even if in Hindu, Buddhist or Sufi religious imagination and hagiography one finds some "holy-fool" type living liberated characters who are so far beyond good and evil that they live like drunken dim-wit drop-outs, the standard purpose of Yoga surely is not to become such irresponsible citizens as Vimalakirti or some Tantric bum! Even if contemplative poise is not a sufficient condition for good conduct, at least it must be a necessary condition for intellectual virtues such as knowledge and rationality. Otherwise the basic assumption of Yoga-metaphysics of the mind would be false. Why? Because, Yoga looks upon an afflicted state of the nature-constitutive feelings of pleasure, pain and torpor as the cause of theoretical ignorance or logical confusion, an ill-balanced affective life to be the cause of greed, hate, violence, cruelty or egotism in public social life. Unless Yoga-philosophical psychology is fundamentally mistaken, how can people have clear and correct ideas and beliefs about themselves and the world while "the turbulent rivers of their minds flow towards evil?"

I shall try to answer these questions by looking at the place of logical reasoning and ethical conduct in the life of an ideal meditator, as recommended by Samkhya Yoga, Mahayana Buddhism, and Kashmir Shaivism. But I shall also question the general line of thinking which draws conclusions about (the lack of) correlations from real-life statistics by looking at the fate of the purported unity of moral and intellectual virtues. By unity here I do not mean strict "identity or reducibility: to claim that not doing to others what one resents when it is done to oneself requires clear

conceptual thinking" is not to say that fairness in practice is nothing but clear thinking! The unity between cognitive clarity and just conduct consists in the former creating the enabling conditions for the latter.

Let us forget about Yoga or meditation, for a moment. Let us look at the direct correlation between cognitive rationality and ethical perfection. It is a fact that many obviously moral people seem to be logically dim and many gifted logicians turn out to be ethically derelict, in spite of which Western philosophers who recognise these facts still find the view that intellectual and moral virtues go together quite convincing. What I am trying to say by drawing attention to this last pair of correlation-failures between cognitive and moral merit is that convinced by Plato, Aquinas, or Spinoza, some thinkers assume, *in theory,* that knowledge and logically circumspect thinking about oneself and one's environment are necessary and conducive – note that I am not saying sufficient – conditions for the practice of moral virtues. They would find it upsetting that each of these features seems to be easily available in actual people, one without the other – there are stupid saints as well as intelligent rascals. In a similar way, someone like me, who assumes that Yogic meditation is helped by, and, in turn, helps sound rational judgement as well as virtuous conduct, would find it deeply embarrassing that there are so many meditating nincompoops, non-meditating smart intellectuals, virtuous non-yogis and rogues who practice Yoga regularly. But the embarrassment should not lead to jettisoning the textually endorsed and conceptually intelligible idea that Yoga-meditation requires and ensures ethical alertness, clarity of rational analytical thinking as well as mindful management of emotions, just as even a large number of well-behaved fools and knowledgeable crooks would not quite refute the claim that knowledge and virtue are closely connected. Perhaps what Kant called the "crooked timber" of human nature is indeed so gnarled and knotted that no straight entailment thesis can be defended; perhaps a certain sort of spiritual contemplativeness, in some cases and to some extent, can co-exist with paucity of intellectual and ethical virtues, while moral and logical excellence do not automatically entail spiritual depth! It would still not follow that spirituality or Yoga is *incompatible* with analytical acumen, much less that a morally virtuous person should be unable or unwilling to meditate! But mere compatibility is not even a weak version of unity!

A text like the *Bhagavadgita*, while being quite open to the idea of many alternative forms of Yoga or alternative paths to being good or wise – some more cognitive, some more action-oriented, some more emotional – seems to uphold a moderate unity thesis by claiming that pure knowledge firmed up by the practice of friendliness, compassion, sincerity and self-control leads to the highest Yogic tranquility; that Yoga is skill in action; that emotional equanimity as well as a moral equality in one's treatment of others naturally flow from Yoga; and that *jnana or* discursive, even metaphysical, wisdom and *buddhi or* intelligence are the secret of moral as well as spiritual perfection. How can one defend such a unity thesis in the face of such glaring failures of correlation?

Of course, there is one rather easy way

out of this conundrum. Whenever the concomitance fails one could claim that one of those terms is not genuinely present. The allegedly seasoned Yoga practitioner who shows cruelty or corruption in actual social conduct, one could insist, is not properly practicing Yoga. Or, more daringly, one could insist that an apparent absence of Yogic contemplation is not a real absence. The life of the spiritually uninclined intellectual who seems to be so brilliant in his scientific enquiry is not really devoid of Yoga, one may say. Samadhi of one sort or the other, after all, is a property of all states of the mind (*Yogasutrabhashya* 1.2). Even a Charvaka-thinker such as Daniel Dennett, when he focuses on what he is going to write in his next book goes through a short-lived samadhi state. Even he meditates, although he may not call it that. This line of defense of the connection thesis is seductive but it smells of circularity. We seem to be stipulatively defining the three kinds of excellences in such a way that the "discovery" that one cannot flourish without the other becomes an analytic claim.

A Strong Unity-of-Virtues Thesis

Strong supporters of the unity of intellectual and moral virtues have quite openly taken this circular-sounding tack when faced with glaring cases of dis-unity: rational wisdom and practical virtue must go together because when the one is found without the other, it cannot be a genuine case either of wisdom or of virtue. A certain head of a powerful state may seem to be very shrewd and very bloodthirsty at the same time. But his worldly shrewdness and reasonableness, one can insist, is a veneer underneath which lies a moronic lack of imagination (an inability to put himself in the victim's position, for instance) which makes him so ethically-challenged. A totalitarian or terrorist who urges his people to kill enemies of his religion may sound very pious, look very saintly, or act super-intelligent, having mastery over the latest technology for mass-destruction or mass-brainwashing. But he is neither wise nor pious, and I would say that he does not qualify to even enter a class called "Meditation 101," even if he spends a lot of time praying in his own temple. The idea of emotional intelligence helps us diagnose such glaring cases of clever thugs, as cases of lack of intelligence, after all. This, incidentally, is a rather steep requirement which would disqualify not only a short-tempered Schopenhauer but most of us academic types who profess to possess cognitive skills of one kind or another. Socrates, Spinoza and the *Mahabharata* would quite openly use such harsh standards, rejecting the erudition, eloquence and brilliance of those of us who passionately cling to our views and reputations and are easily crushed by personal calamities and easily bribed by accolades. They would have no use for a *techne* or even an *episteme* which fails to result in *arete* and *phronesis*.

The contemporary epistemologist Linda Zagzebski, in her book *Virtues of the Mind*, puts forward such a unity thesis: "There are both logical and causal connections between moral and intellectual virtues that are just as extensive and profound as the connections among various moral virtues" (158). She shows how logically the moral quality of honesty entails, through careful preservation of truth and justification of what one tells others, the intellectual qualities of perceptual

acuteness and judicious weighing of evidence. She also tries to demonstrate that, causally, moral failings such as excessive pride, envy and desire for power can get in the way of epistemic virtues such as detecting one's own errors and facing the consequences of one's own views. The pugnacity and egotism with which many scientists and professional philosophers cling on to their own positions, often refusing to see evidence to the contrary, shows how a lack of spiritual training in non-clinging has slowed down the progress of science.

The reason this is relevant in the present context is that one can easily find such close logical and causal connections between the requisite qualifications of Yogic meditativeness and intellectual and ethical excellences. If, after remaining frozen in a trance-like transcendental meditation for a couple of days or meditating routinely on Brahman, Allah, God or Emptiness, a religious person shows signs of idiocy, irrationality, incoherent and confused thinking or emerges as a suicide bomber or a serial killer with some allegedly celestial commandment to exterminate in order to liberate, or starts selling his own meditation-technique as an efficient marketing mantra, we could safely say that such concentration or spiritual experience is not Yoga, because it is not supported by good reasoning and does not result in non-violence and non-acquisitiveness, in ahimsa and *aparigraha.* The *Yogasutrabhashya* clearly connects non-violence (a virtue of the heart, as it were) with truthfulness and trustworthiness (more epistemic virtues) by the following remark:

> If you speak and think just as you have perceived, just as you have reasoned for yourself, just as you have heard from reliable sources, if your words are uttered with the intention of transmitting in others the understanding or knowledge that you have yourself achieved, if your statements are not deceptive, nor erroneous, nor communicatively vacuous (by being unintelligible or tautologous), then you may be called a truthful person. Also the whole purpose of speaking should be the good of all living beings, as far as possible, and not harming another living being. Even when spoken with such good intentions if your speech hurts and harms others then that will not count as truth-telling even if it is literally stating the facts as they are. (YSB II.30)

The *Mahabharata* goes to an extreme trying to enrich the epistemic notion of truth by building in thirteen other connected virtues to it, and these include focused steadiness of mind or a peaceful contemplative disposition. So the integration that I am trying to argue for is attempted solely by a very rich notion of truthfulness and sincerity in the twelfth canto of the *Mahabharata.* (Incidentally Bernard Williams in his recent book called *Truth and Truthfulness*, especially in chapters 5 and 8 on the relationship of Truth to Sincerity and Authenticity, respectively, sets himself a similar agenda. I take this to be a healthy antidote to the dismissive minimalism and deflationism regarding the concept of truth.) The thirteen virtues are: equanimity or equity, self-control, non-jealousy, forgiveness, a positive cheerful attitude tempered by shame (if one slips), forbearance, non-maliciousness, renunciation, *dhyana* (meditative concentration), a detached civil dignity, patience, kindness and non-injury. So, all those jealous hard-hearted people who speak the plain truth in order to teach someone a lesson, all those promise-keepers who are ready to

kill their neighbours simply because they had made a foolishly revengeful promise, all those restless distracted gossips who are ready to tattle because they cannot wait to see the excitement or the suffering that will follow, are, by these criteria, *not telling the truth*. Even in the *Nyaya Vartika* (1.1.7), Uddyotakara, while defining the testimony of a knowledge-possessing true-believer as a source of knowledge at second hand, says that the hearer would not have the appropriate epistemic warrant unless the *apta* (trustworthy speaker) tells things as they are by being moved by compassion for others. The Kashmir Shaiva author, Utpaladeva, opens his own gloss on his cryptic verses on "Recognition-of-God in Subjective Consciousness" with these beautiful lines: "Why did I write this treatise? I had to write it because I had to share my knowledge with other people. Why did I have to share my knowledge with other people? Because I was ashamed of enjoying alone the treasure of wisdom which has been given to me as a gift and I wanted other people to benefit from it too." Just as kindness can lead to speaking out what you know, fearlessness or courage can also lead to speaking out. The sincerity with which the ancient Indian woman philosopher Gargi speaks up in a male dominated assembly where she was once shut up rather rudely is recorded in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*. In spite of being threatened by the main speaker that she is crossing her limits and may die if she asks more questions, she goes on to ask the most spiritually profound and trenchant pair of questions of Yajnavalkya, her formidable interlocutor, which brings out the deepest metaphysical truth about the self. Her truthful dare epitomises, for me, all the three characteristics, of intellectual honesty, moral courage and Yogic equanimity, which come from winning over the fear of death.

Logic and Yoga

The practice of Yoga, we must not forget, is squarely based on the Samkhya theory of knowledge. Samkhya recognises three sources of knowledge: perception, scriptural authority, and inference. But it rejects, in so many words, the possibility that the first or the second, sensory perception or Vedic or any other kind of testimony would show us the way to complete cessation of suffering. What is left then? Contrary to popular expectation, Samkhya does *not* bring in extra-sensory perception at all. No experience can give us liberatory knowledge. What kind of knowledge of the difference between the *vyakta* (manifest) manifold of the effects and their *avyakta* (unmanifest) cause, on the one hand, and *jna* (pure consciousness), on the other, can liberate us, permanently and exhaustively from all kinds of suffering? Well, it has to be knowledge by reasoning or inference. That is Samkhya's official answer. And Yoga does not depart from this in spirit, insofar as samadhi or concentration-states are first described as "with rational discrimination," "with inner argumentation" and only then proceeding to the non-conceptual highest states.

The centrality of logical reasoning in Yoga-practice is clearly enunciated in the pre-Patanjali (most likely Pre-Buddhist) ancient text *Maitrayani Upanishad*. This speaks of *six* instead of eight limbs of Yoga. These are:

Pranayama (Breathing exercises)
Pratyahara (Withdrawal of the senss)
Dhyana (Meditation)

Dharana (One-tipped holding of the mind on an object)
Tarka (Inward reasoning)
Samadhi (Stilling the flow of the mind)

Indeed, this Upanishad says that the ultimate experience of Brahman is attained through reasoning alone: *brahma tarkena pasyati* or "… Having fully arrested the outward flow of speech-mind-and-vital energy, one *sees* Brahman *with reasoning*." It is this six-limbed Yoga, rather than the eight-limbed Yoga of Patanjali, that Abhinavagupta alludes to in his early eleventh century magnum opus *Tantraloka,* when he asserts, that the most important limb of Yoga is "good reasoning." In the fourth and thirteenth chapter of this definitive work on Kashmir Shaiva Tantra, Abhinavagupta says that much more essential and effective than breath-control or withdrawal of the senses, is the Yogic method of arguing with oneself and deepening the lessons learnt from one's teacher or scripture by self-critical rational reflection. Abhinavagupta calls this method for the "powerful mind" *shaktopaya*, which is one of the four alternative paths to the recognition of the unity of Universal consciousness and the individual knowing self. In some rare cases, such good reasoning dawns on a practitioner without any extraneous instruction from any teacher. For such people, their own intellect or conscience acts as their teacher. And in the Tantras, they are said to be "taught by the goddesses – the self-aware sensory powers."

Such a self-taught good reasoner manifests the divine flash of *pratibha* (cognitive "genius"), an intuitive synoptic insight into all things, and especially into the essence of all languages and *agamas* (authentic spiritual traditions).

But even if one is not graced with such innate talent, with practice of clear thinking, logical reasoning, study of scriptures, instruction by a capable teacher, debate and discussion, the shaky flame of universal cognitive fire becomes gradually steadier and brighter. With a rationally cleansed and brightened light of insight "everything can be known," says Abhinavagupta, quoting Patanjali's *Yogasutras* (*Tantraloka,* chs. IV and XIII). Similar importance is given to reasoning in the Mahayana Buddhist tradition of meditation as well. Refuting common misconceptions about meditation, Tsong Khapa responds to two anti-intellectualist qualms with characteristic vigour.

The first misconception: "When meditating on the path to Buddhahood, one should not do repeated analysis with discerning wisdom. Such analysis is only useful at the level of preparatory studies." Tsong Khapa responds:

> This is [the] nonsensical chatter of someone who is utterly ignorant of the crucial points of practice.... First study with someone what you intend to practice and come to know it secondhand. Next use scripture and reasoning to properly reflect on the meaning of what you studied, coming to know it first hand.... Thus you need both repeated analytical meditation and nonanalytical stabilizing meditation (*shamata* and *vipasana*).... [Again Tsong Khapa warns us] Not knowing this system, some even propound, "If you are a scholar, you only do analytical meditation. If you are a spiritual seeker or adept you only do stabilizing meditation." This is not the case, because each must do both.... You must use discernment for both of these methods of meditation. If you lack or are deficient in such analytical meditation, then you will not develop stainless wisdom, the precious life of the path.

Yoga and Moral Virtues

Not only are the positive and negative virtues of *Yama* and *Niyama* relevant as initial qualifying conditions of Yoga practice, constant self-vigilance about non-injury to other living beings, truth and non-covetousness and sexual continence are also sustainedly valued, chiefly since as long as one has a human body one can expect to feel the inner enemies of lust, desire, anger and egotism. Even the living liberated person normally behaves in a virtuous way, albeit effortlessly. So, ethical conduct accompanies Yoga-practice at the start, in the middle and at the end. There is an intricate rhythm of mutual support and safeguarding through which these moral virtues work in unison. Truthfulness works only when tempered with compassion, as we have already shown above. Compassion without analytical reasoning and the regular practice of self-criticism would turn into self-indulgent sentimentalism. Non-acquisitiveness and vigilance against greed are needed to protect the meditator from using her spirituality as a ruse for gathering fame or fortune. Why then do we see so many alleged Yoga practitioners living or at least occasionally behaving in ethically deplorable ways? Well, the answer, I am afraid, has to be that there are too many imposters, fakes and self-deluded claimants of Yoga-expertise. Partial development of only one aspect of the Yoga practice to the neglect of others leads to such fake Gurudom or what Kant called Sensation-Dreamers and Reason-Dreamers! (*Dreams of a Spirit-Seer*).

After divulging, to the insistent Nachiketa, the mystery of the deathless self which can only be "realised" by a lucky few, Death, in the *Katha Upanishad* warns, "No one who has not desisted from wrong actions, has not become calm, has not arrested one's mind, can recognise the true nature of the self, only by proper wisdom can the state of freedom be attained." As Krishna also says very categorically: *asamyatatmana yogo dusprapa iti me matih* or for a person who does not have self-control, Yoga would be hard to attain. With a facile appeal to the popular but ill-understood notion of "transcending all morality," a large number of Yoga teachers practice and preach licentious corrupt behaviour. Any one who has to practice Truth or Ahimsa in their full form would need to concentrate dispassionately on evidence with pure devotion to truth and give up greed. Yoga without constant striving for minimising violence and acquisitiveness is a farce.

Concluding Un-Orthodox Confession

When I am torn between two incompatible philosophical positions, such as a direct realism about the external world and a subjective idealism, or between hard determinism and libertarianism about the future, or between a substantial eternal self and a mere set and series of loosely connected ephemeral psycho-physical states, and since I clearly and distinctly feel the force of the arguments and counter-arguments on either side, I sometimes feel, like Wittgenstein did, that the problem must be spurious and both sides must be somehow trapped by language. But at other times I feel a profound sense of perfect equipoise and an *epoche* which enables me to occupy as it were that middle ground between the two cognitive armies where I become ready to listen to an almost celestial song in a middle voice. For a few moments, during these rare transformations of philosophical

dilemmas into a literally breath-taking opening up of a space where pure awareness self-savours awareness, I seem to be in no rush to take any one side. I viscerally feel the connection between breath and mind, or to be precise, between no-mind and no-breath. The alternation of a perfectly indecisive intellect turns into the playful freedom to choose between optional ways of world-making. From the opening line of the "Nasadiya Hymn" of *Rig Veda* to the opening line of Nagarjuna's *Mulamadhyamakakarika*, the exclusion of both logical extremes or even of their denials does not leave room for any admissible ontological thesis in the logical space but it does not therefore exclude a middle. The middle between such affirmations and negations is somehow mysteriously connected to the middle between in-breathing and out-breathing, that hairline gap between one wave of cognition and another that the Tantric *agamas* talk about. This secret middle point is felt as the phenomenological heart of pure object-less subjective but egoless consciousness.

This makes good sense of Nagarjuna's identification of emptiness with the middle place, of the use of the Sanskrit word *vimarsha* for the most intimate and unique freedom-entailing feature of consciousness in Abhinavagupta's thought as well as its use for a pendulous doubting awareness in Nyaya. Questioning, doubting, debating are thus felt by me, in those moments, to be continuous with the act of meditation. I begin to see a trans-historical significance in the fact that Descartes had to go through the sceptical cleansing before regaining epistemic access to the self and the perfect Being, though he slipped back into metaphysical egotism. Sincere engagement with rational two-sided reasoning headed for an ego-shattering stalemate constitutes a path to that viewless nowhere where non-dual sentience can stay free. It can playfully and compassionately look back at its own silly attachments wondering, as a recently woken up person does, how on earth could I think I was someone looking at other things and thinkers?

I confess that whenever I have this experience for a few brief moments, I am tempted to think that I am beginning to understand what Abhinavagupta meant when he wrote:

> That pure sentience whose ultimate essence consists in the sheer light of awareness, when it gives up the roles of the object known and of the ego knowing it, shines all by itself as the clear sky. This pure sentience is called the empty form of consciousness which is the final stage that the Yogins attain through their reflective discursive cogitations of the form: "not this, not this." (*Tantraloka* VI.9-13)

This open empty space-like consciousness itself takes the form of the vital force called *prana* and creates the vibrating waves of thrill in the body, surges up as the inner drive of the will and is known by such various names as "vibration," "efflorescence of creativity," "tranquil repose," "the living being," and *pratibha* or "the genius in the heart."

Of course, this state does not last. I feel compelled to leave the middle and take up a definite position (as Descartes did), defend it with conviction which brings attachment, call that "my view," my lineage, my culture, my discovery, etc. Thus I am back into the entire package of egotistical living. But I have an optimistic feeling that if I could somehow keep practicing, to the best of my ability – and this is where Dharma comes in as a glue between *Tarka* and

Yoga – the virtues of non-injury, candour, non-acquisitiveness, friendship, compassion, rejoicing at the success of others, cheerfulness, indifference towards the moral failings of others, then the integration between my analytical-rational equipoise and my moral mindfulness would together gel into a more permanent disposition towards a contemplative calm. Such a peaceful, inwardly vigilant and outwardly unattached disposition may enable me to witness this wonderful sport of the plural world of much pain and some pleasure while being right in the middle of it. Such integration of logic and meditation can happen, I believe, only if the bridge of unflagging moral mindfulness is cultivated. It is because I lack proper practice of *Yama* and *Niyama* that these ecstatic transformations of philosophical analysis into contemplative stillness do not stabilise in me. If some day I ever come closer to the hardest achievement in this integration programme: the internalisation of the moral virtues, I shall be able to tell you exactly what morality has to do with spiritual salvation. Or better, you will have to guess just by watching me act, because I shall have stopped talking about it.

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essay

Genuine vs. Apparent Knowledge and Justification

Stephen H. Phillips

|| *oṃ paramātmane namaḥ* ||

sarve bhavantu sukhinaḥ |
sarve santu nirāmayāḥ |
sarve bhadrāṇi paśyantu |
mā kaścid duḥkhabhāg bhavet ||

bhadrāḥ, mahodayāḥ, bahu-vyaya-prayatnena kuṭila-yukty-alaṃkṛtena adbhūte 'pi prātīcya-darśane pramāṇa-śāstre spaṣṭatvam pramāṇa-viṣaye eva nâsti | *pramā-tad-ābhāsayor viśeṣo na subodhitaḥ* | *bhāratīya-darśanād iha anyatra ca bahu śikṣaṇīyam* | *nyāya-nātha-rathena ayaṃ viśeṣo mohita-buddhi-vināśī* | *śāntir bhavatu* | *tasmād āṅglī-bhāṣāyām*| *

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THIS PAPER FOCUSES ON a simple distinction in Indian philosophy, more specifically in the *pramanashastra*. This is the distinction between genuine and apparent (but false) knowledge, justification, etc., *sad-vastu-tad-ābhāsayor viśeṣaḥ*. To begin with, I have two reasons for taking this track. One, the state of Anglo-American epistemology, and the other, the right interpretation of the *pramanashastra*. I'll begin by expanding on these reasons, first with respect to the Western controversy and then the interpretive point.

The rest of the paper homes in on the genuine and the apparent as distinguished in epistemology. The distinction is prominent in the writings of Gangesha and the later thinkers as they work out details of

* An earlier version of this paper was read at a conference sponsored by the Infinity Foundation: "Completing the Global Renaissance," July 2002. Makarand Paranjape has asked me to keep the Sanskrit opening to the version that was presented and to provide a translation: "You the fortunate, prosperous and blessed (members of the audience, please listen). Although astonishing in its effort and expenditure, adorned with clever arguments, Western philosophy has not achieved clarity in epistemology on the topic of the sources of knowledge (perception, inference, and the rest). The distinction between genuine and apparent knowledge is not well-understood. From Indian philosophy, on this topic as on others, there is much to be learned. Carried by the leader Nyaya in its chariot, (knowledge of) this distinction destroys confusion. May there be peace – thus the following in English."

normative epistemology. But it is also made very early in metaphysical disputes; in particular, it is used in the *Nyayasutra* to refute Nagarjuna or another illusionist who would deny the reality of the objects of common experience, claiming that things are unreal or not really existent. Vatsyayana points out in the *Nyayasutrabhashya* (4.2.34) that the concept of the apparent whatever (object or person) presupposes the concept of the genuine variety, formed from the previous experiences of persons. For example, an apparent person which is really a wooden post misperceived from a distance, implies that there are persons and wooden posts in reality. In other words, the apparent derives from the real. The apparently F could not be recognised without knowledge of things that are F genuinely. Sometimes this is called the parasitism argument concerning concept acquisition – the apparent is parasitic on the true – and it seems cogent. In the context of classical Indian metaphysics, the question is how far does it ramify.

Vatsyayana's is only a certain kind of refutation of a certain kind of skepticism, in my view. It is not a refutation of sophisticated subjectivism or non-realism – so Ram-Prasad argues in *Advaita Epistemology and Metaphysics* – proposed by Advaitins who maintain that the genuine-apparent distinction proves not that things are unreal but the possibility that things are not as they seem. Thus there is room for *brahmavidya*. However, in my view Ram-Prasad's and Advaita's non-realism concedes too much, insisting merely on compatibility with Vaisheshika or whatever the current scientific or physical theory. Advaita fails to compete on the real issues and points of paradigm-conflict. It does not provide a spiritual or mystic psychology, at least not one integrated into a spiritual or Brahman-centred metaphysics. I am afraid that by the end of the paper we shall have gone quite a way from the beginning as I come around to side with those who want closer ties between philosophy and yogic psychology. Let's move on to the *marman* (vital points).

Within current Anglo-American epistemology there is a divide between the so-called internalists and externalists. The externalist is, generally speaking, a reliabilist; the internalist a Cartesian, to use philosophic shorthand. The externalist sees knowledge flowing out of causal connections, natural processes that generate true beliefs, paradigmatic perception. The internalist is concerned with criteria for warranted belief that hold whether or not a belief is actually true. Both the old foundationalists and their coherentist opponents are counted internalists today; the externalist is the newcomer. Internalists stress that as epistemic agents we have a duty to believe responsibly, checking our beliefs against the standards of logic and science. Whether our beliefs actually hit the facts is, so it is argued, not the main point. Remarkably, the externalist concedes that from a first-person point of view nothing is sure. Cognitive processes are fallible. Reliability for a particular doxastic practice – belief-forming practice – is determined by its track record, but no process proves infallible. Mathematical proof gets separate treatment.

In the current literature, the two sides are at such loggerheads that internalists complain that externalists speak a different language or have different intuitions than theirs. Externalists, for their part, resort to their own *ad hominems*. Now J. N. Mohanty in

Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought shows that Indian logic stakes out middle ground between extreme oppositions characteristic of Western treatments: intentionalism versus extensionalism, psychologism versus platonism, inductive and deductive cogency of argument. My point is in much the same spirit: the distinction between the genuine and the apparent shows the way to cut through the opposition of internalism and externalism in epistemology.

First, Naiyayikas, Mimamsakas, Vedantins, and others on the classical scene are genuine externalists, not reliabilists. Analytic philosophy's reliabilism leads with the wrong foot, with a kind of skepticism, from the Indian point of view. But in many respects, the Western externalist looks familiar to the Indian epistemologist. For both, the thesis that cognition is causally related to its objects is theoretically central. Nevertheless, reliabilism is not objective enough in its aspirations from the Indian point of view where standards for what counts as knowledge, justification, and truth, as with what counts as a cow or a tree, are set by paradigm-cases conceived thoroughly objectively, that is to say, hitting the highest mark: truth and justification with a truth-tie. Results of genuine perception, inference, or testimony – to mention three *pramana* accepted by just about everyone – are never non-veridical. Only pseudo-knowledge, also pseudo-justification, could ever be false.

Of course, a particular subject S may not be able to tell at the moment whether a particular cognitive event of hers is the result of a genuine *pramana*. People are subject to cognitive error of several types including *anumanabhasa* (logical error) – including *hetvabhasas*, "apparent (but false) reasons or provers." And there is of course illusion, which is *pratyakshabhasa* or apparent (but false) perception. Understanding a false statement and being misled by the testimony of the deluded or of a deceiver, which is a form of *shabdabhasa*, "apparent (but false) testimony," will be treated separately below as I try to correct an interpretive error made by Mohanty and others. But I think the entire approach is easy to see with the example of perception: if a cognition that appears to be perceptual from a first-person point of view has *a* as an F when *a* is not an F in fact, then this is no result of perception as a genuine knowledge source, *pramana*, but an imitator, perhaps a close imitator indistinguishable from the real McCoy, at least by S at the time, *abhasa*.

The concept of the imitator, *abhasa*, in epistemology – apparent or pseudo-knowledge, apparent perception, apparent inference, apparent testimonial transfer of information – is crucial in classical Indian *pramanashastra* (epistemology). It is organisational with Gangesha in his (*Pramana-*) *tattvachintamani*, and in the concept of *anumanabhasa* and the sub-concept, *hetvabhasa*; it dominates Indian logic across all schools – integrating, by the way, logic into epistemology (another virtue of doing things in this fashion). It is presupposed in practically all epistemological investigation from specifying conditions of (legitimate) doubt (such as being faced with contradictory testimony) to concrete efforts of confirmation where determining genuine working of truth-hitting processes is crucial. A "knowledge source," *pramana*, is

defined as the lawful connection between the fact *p* and the belief *p*. To repeat, deviant functioning of a process or "method" that is reliable in that it would normally result in a true belief does not count as a veritable "knowledge source" according to the *pramanashastrins*; the usage is factive. You don't really *see* a snake that is really a rope; you only think you see one. The classical project is to specify the connections between the world and cognisers that result nomologically in cognitions that are true. Thus all of what a Western epistemologist would call false perceptual beliefs, for example, beliefs based on perception but still false, would not be perceptual in the classical Indian scheme of things but rather *pseudo*-perceptual, *pratyakshabhasa*. However, in the concept of the apparent (but false) *pramana* along with the distinction between objective justification and certification (or knowing not merely some fact but also that the cognition of that fact is true), there is room for the best internalist points. Let me try to lay out these ideas, at least their bare bones.

The concept of subjective justification so dear to the Western internalist is present in the objectivist Indian theories. That is just not the whole story; it leaves out the first part, which is objective justification. Objective justification is a cognition being generated in the right way, by a *pramana*. Objective justification can be explicit, as when we check to make sure – this is called certification – or implicit, as when, for example, in driving a car we simply act, guided by sight, without worrying about our cognitions' veridicality. Such a bit of perceptual knowledge is, we say, objectively justified for S in that S's cognition has been generated by a *pramana*, but it is not *certified* for her. Certification is something else – the Western internalist is right to insist on the point. The perceptual cognition while driving is, though objectively justified, not certified, not known self-consciously by S to be true.

Of course, not all of the Indian theorists agree with every detail of this picture, especially about certification when it comes to certain topics such as self-awareness. Intricate exchanges occur on *svasamvedana* and *svatah* as opposed to *paratahprakasha* and *paratahpramanya* (self-cognition and self-certification as opposed to apperception, a second-order awareness, and certification by another). One set of theorists holds that whether or not certification is a second-order cognitive process, it amounts to inferential knowledge that a target cognition is true. Others hold that every cognition wears veridicality on its face – at least we assume veridicality as a default – de-certification is the issue. And still others propose that a self that is essentially self-aware is the precondition of all cognition and experience. The realists are confused about self-knowledge though they may get the story about knowledge of the external world right, at least provisionally right. More about this controversy in the second part of the paper.

Yet despite the complexity there is much in common. With certification, self-conscious confidence in a cognition's truth is central. In Nyaya, a knowledge source can be identified both by intrinsic features and in relation to a particular result. This is one way a cognition can be known to be veridical. There are two others according to Nyaya. The Nyaya approach is, by the way, the one I know best and I am prone to think it the most adequate. However, in overview, not

only Nyaya but all the classical epistemologists who are logicians and concerned with normative epistemology and debate rules present causal paradigms whereby beliefs can be evaluated. The Buddhists Dignaga and Dharmakirti, for example, work just as centrally with the causal notion of a "knowledge source," *pramana*, as any Indian realist. In addition to the *pramana* touchstone, a cognition can be certified with respect to its fruit, success of effort and action – a second way that is also tied to causal relations and practically universally accepted. A third procedure involves typing, according to Gangesha and Navya-Nyaya at least. A cognition belongs to a type with virtue of its object-hood, its having, say, "*a* is F" as its indication or intentionality – a feature it can share, by the way, with other cognitions, such that two people, S and T, can have the same cognition in this sense. So once a cognition as specified by its object-hood has been certified, a later cognition known to be a token of that type would be certified, too.

Except Nagarjuna and his school, which we will turn to in a moment, none on the classical scene takes issue with the causal framework of the *pramana* approach, though some, let me mention again, do subscribe to a kind of self-certification that rides piggy-back on apperception or whatever the way it is that a particular cognition is itself cognised. Also, Buddhists such as Dharmakirti admit a form of inference that looks like a kind of *a priori* knowledge whereas Naiyayikas view all inference as depending crucially on prior perceptions. Classical Indian epistemologists do not speak with a single voice. But the differences are not a major concern for my purposes since there is a common focus of analysis, the *pramana*, the "knowledge source," and common ideas about certification and its imitators which are sufficient to show the false antinomy of internalism and externalism in the West.

Let us look at the concept of pseudo-certification, certification that seems right from a first-person point of view but that is misleading in fact. This is part of the way the externalism/internalism opposition is bridged, or, better, avoided to start with. Apparent certification can be *badhita* (defeated) by S's coming to learn something that undermines or rebuts a putatively certificational pseudo-inference, but genuine certification requires that there be no *badhaka* (ultimate defeater) in fact, i.e., that S's evidence for regarding a cognition *C* as veridical would hold no matter what else she comes to know. *Siddhanta* (established positions) serve as winnowing devices, and what we already know can prevent wrong cognitions from arising. But we are not infallible. Just about any cognition, including an apparent certification, can prove to be wrong.

Further internalist features of classical Indian epistemology centre on the identification of special epistemic properties called *guna* and *dosha* (*excellences* and *faults*). Given doubt or desire to know, these are said to be signs of knowledge sources, or of their mere *abhasa* (semblances), and thus key to certification and the establishing of right positions. Now these properties have to be cognised. They are labelled from an epistemic perspective; they are "excellences" and "deficiencies" from an epistemic point of view. For instance, one may make an inference and act on its basis, but to certify that the conclusion drawn is the result of inference as a knowledge source is to

check the process to make sure that it is based on a *pervasion* of F-hood by G-hood, considering an inference from F*a* to G*a*, a fact confirmed with reference to positive correlations – other things both F and G – and negative correlations – things not-G and not-F. On the other hand, such epistemic excellences are themselves supposed to have causal relevance, even in inference. They are both properties figuring in causal laws and signs of knowledge sources. To repeat, people do not normally distrust their cognitions, nor need they be able to say why they have knowledge when they have it. But disagreement is one of several conditions leading to real doubt. Then identification of knowledge sources and "excellences" and "deficiencies" as epistemic properties becomes relevant, answering questions, restoring confidence, removing doubt, and ending dispute.

I turn now to the distinction between genuine and apparent testimonial knowledge, *śābda-bodha-tad-ābhāsayor viśeṣaḥ*. Mohanty and others have worried about how well the Indian theories of meaning, which are mainly referentialist, handle the sense/reference distinction ironed out by analytic philosophy (*Reason and Tradition in Indian Thought*), and he has criticised Nyaya for, as he sees things, failing to recognise that we can understand a false statement. And Arindam Chakrabarti and a dozen others in *Samvada*, a volume of philosophic discussion, half in Sanskrit, concern themselves with how Naiyayikas would view analytic philosophy's "propositions," whether, for instance, they could find a place in the realist ontology, or are already there, etc., including, of course, the nature of false propositions, which seem meaningful but fail to hit the facts.

Mohanty's criticisms and amendments are unnecessary. A prime example of *shabdabodhabhasa*, "apparent (but false) knowledge from testimony," is a false statement of a speaker that a hearer understands and accepts, having no reason not to. As with perceptual cognitions where there is no block, with testimony uptake and understanding are normally fused, unless, for example, the hearer knows in advance the opposite or knows the speaker is a liar or deluded, the statement is not well-formed, etc. The object-hood or intentionality of the false statement understood in normal conditions that a hearer takes to be true, i.e., the *vishayata* (intentionality) of the hearer's comprehending and accepting cognition, which is false, is to be analysed in much the same way as that of an apparent perception. The "mode" or "way," *prakara*, F, that, paradigmatically, an object *a*, a qualificandum, has been cognised ("F*a*") has its object-hood lie object-wise elsewhere than in *a*. So, as Jonardon Ganeri also argues (along a different track) in *Semantic Powers*, the mode-hood, to use a neologism, as specified in a particular cognitive occurrence, is roughly equivalent to analytic philosophy's "sense." A false testimonial cognition has its mode-hood specified by a qualifier that does not qualify what it is taken to qualify. Of course, the standard realist story about how modes or qualifiers, which are real-world realities, form memory-impressions, *samskara*, through perception, and the misfiring of memory in all sorts of cases of wrong cognition is available here as with the other types of cognitive *abhasa*. Mohanty misses an opportunity to find in Indian traditions here, as on other issues, a middle way through a Western

controversy and polarisation of sides.

Next, let us move to metaphysics, or meta-epistemology, and the *Nyayasutra* argument I mentioned at the beginning. First, some context. Nagarjuna in his *Vigrahavyavartini,* "Warding off Strife," fends off an apparently Naiyayika attack on the Buddhist Emptiness thesis, "All is without self-nature," *sarve bhava nihsvabhavah*, which he interprets as everything being related to everything else, interdependent origination. Now in Nagarjuna's telling the opponent to the Buddhist message has demanded a proof with reference to a *pramana*. How does the Buddhist thesis flow out of a "knowledge source?" The same question appears in the *Nyayasutra* (4.2.30). Indeed, whether or not Gautama, the *sutrakara*, or Vatsyayana actually connect with Nagarjuna's text, and whether they connect in the right or wrong way (understanding Nagarjuna's arguments or misunderstanding them), there is a long stretch of text in the second *pada* of the fourth chapter of the *Nyayasutra* where Nagarjuna seems to be engaged. The presumption is that unless Nagarjuna can spell out his *pramana*, unless he can show how his thesis arises out of a *pramana*, the Emptiness thesis is unacceptable. After all, the *pramana* of perception, inference, and so on, attest to all sorts of different, positively existent individuals, some related to one another causally, some not. Nagarjuna responds by counter-attack, by challenging the coherence of the *pramana-prameya* relationship as understood by the Naiyayika. This counter-attack is complex, multifaceted, and I wish to take up only a part of it, that to which Vatsyayana and Gautama appear to respond.

The attack, according to Nagarjuna, is that the Buddhist Emptiness thesis cannot be transmitted and become knowledge on the part of another if the transmitting statement is itself "empty" – that is to say, if it does not have the "self-existence" that is entailed by being a cause. In that case, the *pramana* of testimony could not operate since this like the others is a *generator* of knowledge, the statement of the speaker *causing* knowledge in a hearer to arise. To this, Nagarjuna replies that his words have no such causal power; that they are like the imaginary words of an imaginary character. The *purvapaksha* in *Nyayasutra* (4.2.31-2) reads as follows, echoing his reply: "The conception of *pramana* and *prameya* is like the false awareness of an object in a dream. Or, it is wrong like pseudoperceptions due to magician's trickery, images in clouds, or a mirage." Vatsyayana focuses on dream objects as things that seem to be perceived but are not real or, as he says, not present and therefore not given perceptually. Vatsyayana's response interprets the two *purvapaksha sutras* as formulating an inference, namely, that cognition of the *pramana-prameya* relationship (*a*, the inferential subject) is (F, the predicate to be proved) erroneous, *since* it is (since the inferential subject has the following prover property which stands in a pervaded/pervader relationship with the property to be proved, i.e., since it is) illusory, like (other things that exhibit both the prover and probandum properties), (a) the illusion produced by a magician's trickery, (b) sky castles, (c) mirages, and (d) objects in dreams. A second step draws the conclusion that as these objects do not exist, the *pramana-prameya* relationship does not

exist. Formulated like this as an inference – or two inferences – the argument is subject to the rules governing genuine inference, and there is failure on three counts: first, concerning the pervasion presumed, second, concerning the step that would move from – let us admit for the sake of argument – a particular illusory cognition of a *pramana-prameya* relationship to the conclusion that there is no *pramana-prameya* relationship at all, and, third, concerning a meta-rule governing the employment of inferences, namely, as with testimony, to generate knowledge in another person. Why should cognition of *pramana-prameya* relationship be grouped with dreams and illusions, whose objects are not present at the time of the cognition? Why should it not be classified instead with veridical waking experiences whose objects are present? The Buddhist has identified no feature of such cognition, such as leading to frustration of effort, to support his alleged *vyapti* or concomitance. Second, dream objects, though not causing dream experiences immediately in the manner of perception, are not absolutely non-existent. One dreams of the distant friend, but the friend, while absent, presumably exists and would not have been dreamed of, if not encountered previously. Dream objects are like the objects of longing (for something not present) and rememberings, in that they enter into dreaming through the *samskara*, the memory impressions, formed by previous perceptions. Can the Buddhist provide an analysis of the content or object-hood of dreams without referring to and thus admitting the existence of real objects? Of course not. The deeper reason the Buddhist makes his argument seems to be the assumption that waking experiences in general, like dreams, lack real objects. But this is patently false. If waking experiences lacked objects like dreams, then they would be no different from dreams, and the dreaming and waking experience would be epistemically the same. But if there is no epistemic difference between these, no ice is cut by saying that cognition of *pramana-prameya* relationship is like a dream, since one might as well say that is like a waking experience. Thus the second problem is of the same type as the third, namely, that the Buddhist argument is self-defeating, undercutting conditions for its success. For, just as Nagarjuna's own *purvapakshin* suggested, if all cognitions are equally false or even equally unrelated to the epistemic touchstone of a "knowledge source," then to classify cognition of *pramana-prameya* relationship as false says nothing, there being no basis for the distinction between truth and falsity, valid argument and its opposite, or, as the Naiyayika would put it, between the epistemically genuine and its mere *abhasa* (semblance).

The concept of the illusory is parasitic on that of the veridical. It is its imitator. This holds both in general and in particular. Just as it is self-defeating to argue that all cognition is false (since that cognition too would come under indictment), so one cannot meaningfully assert that an apparent F is only apparently F and not genuinely F if one does not know what it would be to be an F genuinely. The concept of the former derives from that of the latter. So there is no reason to think that cognition of *pramana* in relation to *prameya* is somehow wrong in principle, nor, then, is it wrong to look for *pramana* when

there is doubt and controversy. Thus, the Buddhist Emptiness thesis is not established.

However, is there more here than the avoidance of a kind of skepticism? In other words, is there more here than the observation that any argument that would undercut the distinction between warranted assertion and the unwarranted has to be wrong? What is really at issue in the exchange between the Buddhist and the Naiyayika? Vatsyayana's reasoning sounds a lot like a famous argument for the self within Advaita Vedanta, a school whose overall message is not very different from the Buddhist's, namely, that the objects of this world are not as they seem, that they are really joined in something else, Brahman, a universal consciousness, absolute, a single self so interconnected as to be the only genuine existent, *sat*. Shankara and his followers argue that it cannot be denied that there is a self, for the denying presupposes a self who denies (*Brahmasutrabhashya* 1.1.1). Shankara also repeats many of the realist criticisms of Buddhist subjectivism and skepticism including the parasitism argument outlined above (BSB 2.2.28). Indeed his commentary on this *sutra* seems practically to plagiarise, so precisely does he make Vatsyayana's points and in the same order.

But the late Advaitins are very insistent, as Ram-Prasad shows in *Advaita Epistemology and Metaphysics*, that the realist conclusion that there is an external world bound together by causal laws is a cognition that is itself dependent on consciousness. The realist takes a step too far in holding that it is demonstrated – not merely assumed but proved ñ that there is an external causal network working independently of consciousness. The late Advaitins, whom I call compatibilists, say that so long as a person has not Brahman-awareness, the realists' causal network is rightly to be assumed. Nevertheless, it is, they say, demonstrable that the epistemic status called *assumption* is all that the thesis deserves, surely not a *certainty* that would exclude the message of the Upanishads. This is that there is available awareness that shows self and world to be one in Brahman, which is of course a thesis that appearances tell against. Ram-Prasad uses the term "non-realism" for the position that while a world of objects interacting independently of consciousness has to be assumed within the framework of ordinary, untransformed consciousness, such externality should be recognised as sublatable in mystic knowledge. In part, Shankara buys into the Buddhist dream polemic: dreams and other illusions show the possibility that the differences and oppositions presumed in everyday consciousness can be (as Ram-Prasad puts it) "overruled" by some other consciousness.

My own view is that this is right. Dreams and illusion do cut the ice against uncritical realism. How can we be sure from our limited *pramana* that *brahmavidya* is impossible? Such possibility is all that the compatibilist Advaitin maintains, and the dream polemic does, I think, show this. Things could be presented differently; what we believe depends on our consciousness. A similar point was made by Bertrand Russell who said that perhaps it is imaginable that there be a universe without consciousness but then all the suns would be dark. We surely cannot imagine our world without presupposing consciousness. And why just because our

everyday consciousness has evolved and has utility for survival, should it not be sublatable by some higher, better consciousness, better in the sense of better revealing some important features of reality normally hidden? Illusion shows the possibility, as Shankara himself insists (the dream analogy of course appears in several Upanishads, most prominently, perhaps, in the *Mandukya Upanishad*). Mystic testimony gives the prospect some weight.

So where are we? The problem with Advaita non-realism is that it purchases compatibility with science too cheaply, any science, even science at the service of a thoroughly materialist metaphysics. Thus it loses the opportunity to connect its mysticism with new science, with mystic psychology, in particular. Advaita can tell no causal story about Brahman's reality giving rise to Brahman-knowledge, being, I think, confused by the possibility of an experience whose only content seems to be itself, or, possibly, by consciousness being a precondition for all experience. Or, the confusion lies in a misunderstanding of Brahman's unity, which would seem to make causal relations impossible (nothing is a cause of itself). The logic of the expression "gives rise to" implies a distinction between cause and effect; the causal relation is asymmetrical and irreflexive and thus is not identity. Everyone understands at least in rough terms how our senses and objects give rise to knowledge, and science provides considerable detail about the causal processes involved. But I cannot find any imaginable route from the reality of Brahman's characteristics (bliss, all-pervasiveness, omniscience, etc.) to their appearing as content or direct indication of a mystical experience – I mean I cannot presuppose the Advaitin understanding of Brahman. Certain Advaitins accept the chakra system of Tantrism, and others say a lot about the *adhikara* necessary to make one fit and ready for *brahmasakshatkara*. But Advaita cannot tie these up in a truly causal story even though the talk is all causal (*sakshatkara*, "*making* the object immediate"). Look at the long-espoused theory of purification of mind, the view that it needs to be rid of the lower qualities of nature, the *rajas* and *tamas*, which then brings about the clarity of mind, the *sattva*, necessary to *brahmavidya*. And there is the Vivarana subschool's commitment to the efficacy of hearing statements of the Upanishads to bring about the supreme good. But the Advaitin only appears to commit to a causal tale. By the way, the Vishishtadvaitin Ramanuja excoriates Shankara on the causal point.

Advaitins cannot connect psychology or any science to *brahmavidya*; they suggest, then, that it could very well be that no causal story can be provided or *anirvachaniya*. But then there could be no way to differentiate veridical and non-veridical Brahman-experience, genuine enlightenment versus its mere *abhasa* (semblance), and no possibility of yoga-science. What is needed is a Brahman-centred philosophy that involves a richer reality than Advaita's non-dual Brahman in order to accommodate even India's – *a fortiori* the world's – traditions of mysticism and spirituality. We need a mystic psychology integrated into a spiritual worldview in the way that brain and drug-based psychology is integrated into, or flows from, a wider materialist

paradigm. We need to take a lesson from the classical Indian *pramana* theorists and work towards a spiritual science founded on causal principles. It should not be hamstrung by any sort of anti-realism, no matter what its name or forebears.

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essay

Non-duality in Perception: A Computational Perspective

Rajesh Kasturirangan and Vinay Kumar

Introduction

THIS PAPER IS A first foray in comparative science. While one may be willing to accept that the scientific method may be culture neutral, one cannot say the same about the presuppositions underlying a given scientific discipline. In particular, most of modern science assumes the duality of subject and object, in its methodology and as an (often implicit) ontological assumption. On the other hand, subject-object non-duality is one of the central concepts of Indic thought – in many *darshanas* it is a fundamental ontological assumption about the nature of reality and in those *darshanas* subject-object non-duality (henceforth shortened to non-duality) is also a primary outcome of authentic contemplative experience. We believe that the role of subject-object duality in science, especially cognitive science, can be problematised and that a discussion of non-duality within science can open new avenues for dialogue between modern science and the Indic traditions. In that spirit, we ask, "Is (subject-object) non-duality a useful scientific concept?"

The goal of this paper is to answer the above question affirmatively in the domain of perception science, which we think is particularly appropriate for the unravelling of non-dual concepts because it has always been at the centre of meditative understanding, art and in the last fifty years or so, the computational and experimental techniques of cognitive science. Our approach is to argue within a scientific framework and show how non-duality is necessitated if one is to take the computational approach to perception seriously.

While our arguments are motivated by our understanding of perception within the Indic traditions such as Nyaya-Vaisheshika and Yogachara Buddhism (Matilal), we have restricted our discussion to issues within perception science.

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Preliminary Remarks on Perception

Scientific research on perception is situated within an epistemological framework which assumes subject-object duality. As David Marr says in his classic work on vision, "Vision is the process of discovering from images what is present in the world and where it is" (3). Implicit in this understanding of perception is the assumption that there is an objective world "out there" and that we "see" this world when we open our eyes. However, subject-object duality poses an epistemological problem. If the subject and object are distinct, then how is the subject able to know anything about the object? In cognitive science, the classical solution to this problem of knowledge is to assume that the subject *represents* the world. A representation is a formal structure in the subject's mind that mirrors the structure of the world in some well-specified way, just as the map of a city mirrors its spatial layout. This allows the subject to correctly *infer* percepts from sensory data. Therefore, the assumption of perceiver-world duality leads to the notion that perception is a kind of *unconscious inference*, an assumption shared by most perception scientists. We argue that the assumption of subject-object duality is unnecessary and that from a computational perspective, assuming subject-object non-duality leads to a non-inferential, *scientific* understanding of perception.[1]

A concrete scientific metaphor for representation is a pinhole camera (fig.1). In the pinhole camera model, there is an objective external world of solid objects. Light reflects off these objects and enters the camera via the pinhole and finally strikes the back of the camera, where it forms a picture of the external object. Most work in perception assumes this model as being essentially right, with deviations from the norm (in visual illusions) being attributed to the physiological properties of the human brain.[2]

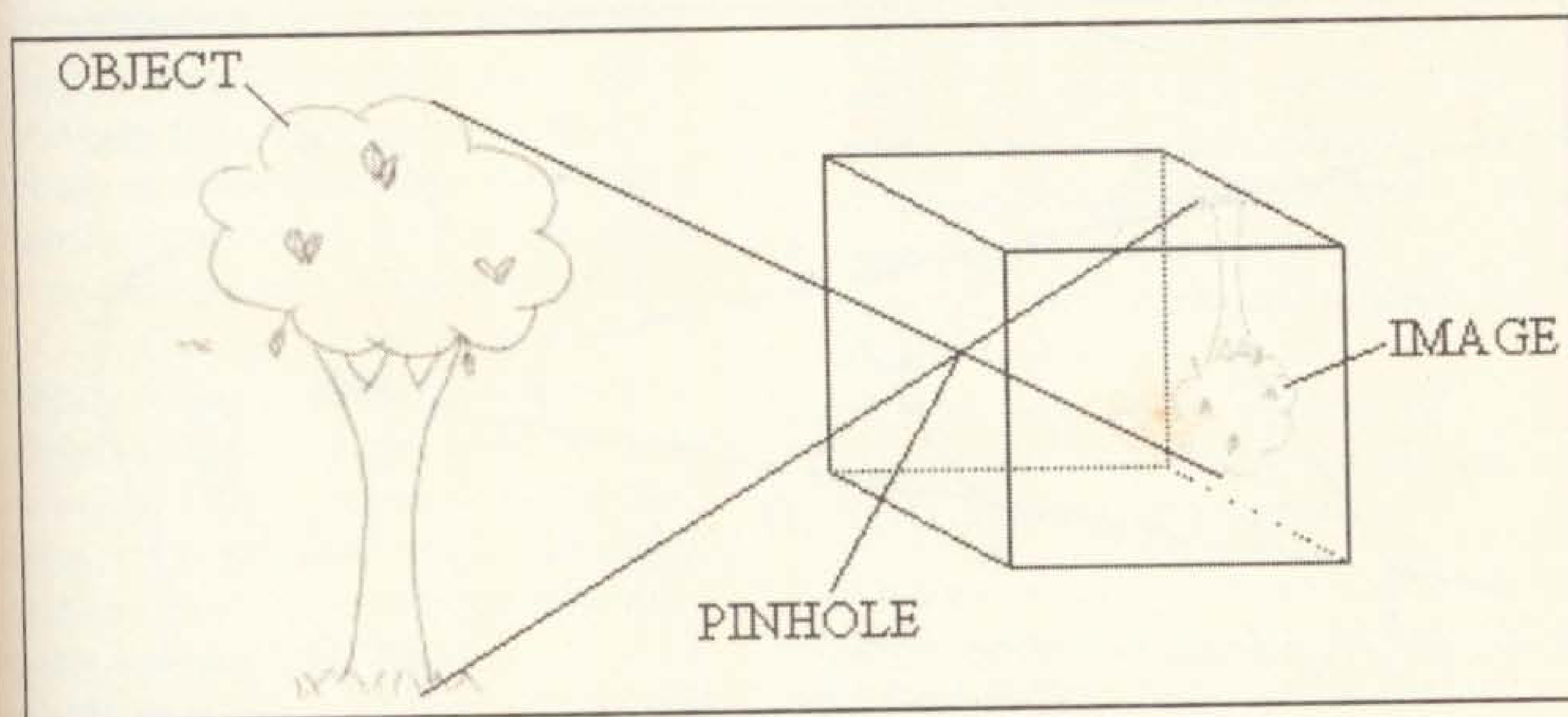


Fig. 1 Pinhole Camera

There is no doubt that the pinhole camera paradigm has led to tremendous

[1] The theory of perception advanced by J. J. Gibson in his *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* is an example of a scientific theory of non-inferential perception. The science in this paper has been greatly influenced by J. J. Gibson.

progress in our understanding of vision. Paradoxically, the technical accomplishments of the last three decades have also exposed several weaknesses of the pinhole paradigm. Starting from J. J. Gibson (*The Perception of the Visual World*), several people have pointed out that the representational account does not explain how representations translate into actions in an animal. Several groups, especially those interested in embodied cognition (Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*; Lakoff and Johnson; Varela, Thompson and Rosch) have questioned the classical, pinhole camera view of perception. Their critique of the pinhole camera model usually points to the inadequacy of representational mechanisms when faced with the richness of this world. Embodied cognitive science assumes that perception occurs as a co-construction of the observer and the environment, an intuition that requires theoretical as well as empirical support.

Within cognitive science, the computational framework has proven to be the best framework for developing theoretical insights into mental faculties. The goal of a computational theory is to make explicit the constraining conditions on a cognitive system. We argue that non-duality can be explicitly introduced as a constraint on perceptual systems, a constraint that reduces the importance of perceptual inference.

Perception and Constraints

As a representational ideal, the pinhole camera is a powerful metaphor that inspired the computational approach to vision pioneered by Marr. However, when people started building computer vision systems and started to

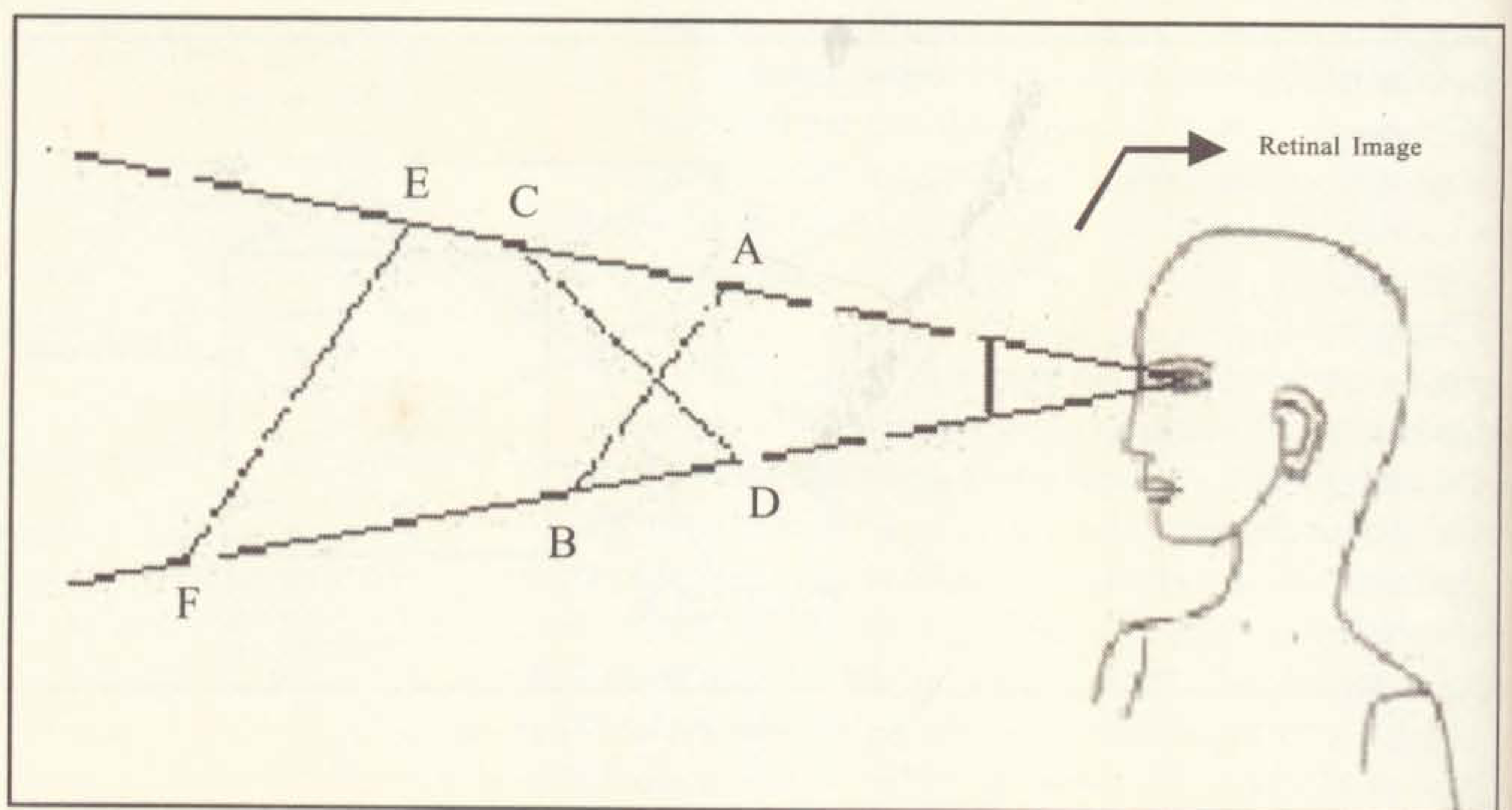


Fig. 2 An example of underdetermination

[2] The pinhole camera model also leads to the debate on whether perception is governed by innate knowledge or learned knowledge. Although this debate, known as the Nativism-Empiricism debate, dominates current scientific research into perception, it is tied to the dualistic framework in which the perception problem is posed. Since we are interested in non-duality, this debate will not concern us.

model human perception as a computational problem they realised that the pinhole camera is far from being comprehensive. The problem is that the information available at the retina is two-dimensional, extremely unstable, noisy and highly impoverished, while our perceptual experience is that of a three-dimensional, stable, richly structured world. In technical terms, the problem of perception is an *underdetermined* problem, which means that the amount of information available is not enough to specify a solution uniquely. This is because the proximal stimulus – the retinal image – does not provide enough information to reconstruct the distal stimulus or the world object. A simple example of such underdetermination is illustrated in figure 2.

In figure 2, the retinal image is a vertical line. Suppose we know that the line in the image is a projection of a line in three dimensions. Is this information enough to reconstruct the original line? The answer is in the negative, since there are an *infinite number* of three-dimensional lines, all of which project to the two-dimensional image such as the lines AB, CD and EF in figure 2. Without additional assumptions, the problem of reconstruction is *intrinsically unsolvable*. From a mathematical point of view, once we add enough additional constraints, underdetermined problems become uniquely solvable. So, for example, in figure 2, if one assumes that the object in the world must be vertical as well as being two centimetres away, we get a unique solution.

From an empirical standpoint, however, the additional constraints cannot be *ad hoc*. After all, the animal embodying these constraints uses them to live in this world. It is crucial to the animal's survival that it incorporates constraints that have biological, ecological and physical plausibility. Consequently, the additional constraints in the perceiver's mind have to be tightly coupled to the structure of the world. To summarise, the problem of perception (and of knowledge in general) is underdetermined. The only way to circumvent underdetermination is to assume that there is a built-in relationship between the perceiver and the perceived, which is a biological form of non-duality that follows naturally from our above arguments.

Therefore, one account of non-duality within a scientific framework is as follows:

(1) *A non-dual theory of perception postulates a close relationship (or constraint) between the perceiver's mental categories and the perceived world categories. In particular, a non-dual constraint is a formal model of an intrinsic relation between world states and mental states.*

(2) *Perception is based on non-dual constraints embodied by an animal in its natural environment.*[3]

In the past thirty years or so, several non-dual constraints (though not seen as such) have proven highly influential in understanding perception as well as in building successful computer vision systems. Two examples of perceptually plausible constraints are given below:

[3] Note that the coupling between the mind and the world has to be synchronic in order to account for perception in real time. A diachronic evolutionary process cannot hope to encode all the constraints necessary for adapting to the world in real time. This also means that non-dual constraints are not purely a property of the perceiver's mind but a real constraint on the mind-world system.

Rigidity – In our empirical world, most of the objects that we encounter are rigid objects, i.e., the shape of the body is constant over time. The assumption of rigidity has helped us understand the recovery of structure from motion (Ullman).

Correspondence – Correspondence is a generalisation of the notion of rigidity. Establishing a correspondence between two images means creating a map that transforms one image into the other or one object into another. Correspondence is crucial for formulating object recognition (Ullman; Beymer and Poggio).

Both rigidity and correspondence are constraints used by the visual system in order to make perceptual inferences about the shape of objects in the perceiver's environment. Without these constraints, inferences about the three-dimensional structure of objects in the world are underdetermined. In general, one can argue that perceptual inference necessitates a priori[4] non-dual constraints linking mental states and world states.

In order for cognitive scientists to take non-duality seriously, we have to show that non-duality (as a concept) has considerable explanatory power within perception science. Our approach is to use the non-dual constraint paradigm systematically for the purposes of developing models and experimental ideas in specific perceptual contexts. We do that in the next two sections, where we show how the non-dual constraint intuition provides a reliable guide for understanding object recognition as well as spatial relations: two fields of considerable current interest in perception research.

Object Recognition

When we see an object, say a cup, we convert disorganised and unstable sensory impressions into structured and stable objects. This is a clearly underdetermined problem. An object may be seen under various lighting and pose conditions. Moreover, the general problem of object recognition has to deal with intrinsic variations in the object. For example, the face of a person may change in subtle ways due to aging and yet it is possible to recognise the person. The scientific debate in this matter revolves around the issues of innate knowledge and learned knowledge. But so far, it seems quite unlikely that either of these positions is completely correct. The world is far too rich and structured for us to expect it to be organised from unstructured sensory stimuli, nor are we innately endowed with representations of all objects in this world.

In engineering, the general problem of object recognition is well beyond the capacity of the best machine vision systems. Almost all existing systems work under greatly constrained environments and use a variety of context-specific constraints to solve the problem.[5] Although such systems are limited, studying computer vision systems for the nature of constraints they apply might provide important insights into the nature of constraints that govern

[4] The use of the term "a priori" relates our account of non-dual constraints to other theories in cognitive science that argue for innate structures in the human mind (Chomsky 3-18). Our notion of non-duality is equivalent to the claim that there are "innate" links between an animal's mind and its environment.

[5] Engineers who design such systems tend to inherently apply the constraint model of perception although it is not recognised as such.

perception. In this respect a look at the research on the recognition of faces provides interesting clues. Research in perception and computer vision has shown that faces are a unique and interesting visual category. On being presented with a face pattern, one can perform several recognition tasks:

(1) Recognise that the pattern is a face;
(2) Recognise the identity of the face;
(3) Recognise the pose and direction of the face;
(4) Recognise facial expressions and emotional states.

Each of these tasks has been the subject of intense research in the computer vision community. Early research in the analysis of faces involved models that were based on constraints imported from the physical sciences, e.g., the 3D shape of the face and knowledge of facial musculature (Essa and Pentland; Terzopoulos and Waters; Yuille, Hallinan and Cohen). In recent times, this has given way to systems that operate with only phenomenal constraints[6] such as relative intensity patterns (Sinha "Object Recognition via Image Invariants") and 2D image-based structures like snakes (Blake and Isard).

As Ullman has shown, any object recognition task depends crucially on obtaining *correspondence* between different images of the same object class. Correspondence can be defined as a mapping that smoothly transforms one instance of an object into other instances. In the absence of such a mapping, object recognition would be impossible to even formulate. Note that correspondence is a non-dual constraint, in the sense that it is a property of the perceiver's mind as much as that of the object being recognised. Thus a non-dual constraint lies at the heart of any object recognition process.

The morphable model (Jones and Poggio; Cootes, Edwards and Taylor) is a sophisticated way of encoding the key non-dual constraint of correspondence. Currently it has been shown to apply for a few but quite general object classes such as faces, vehicles or handwritten letters and digits. We shall now briefly elaborate on the notion of a morphable model and describe the results of our experiments with facial pose recognition.

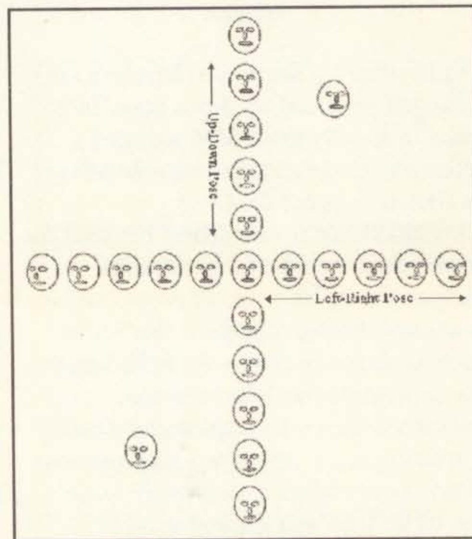


Fig. 3 A simple morphable model

The Linear Morphable Model (LMM) is a way of defining a space of images by the linear combination of specific example-images. For example, in figure 3 we depict an LMM which defines the space of simple face-like line drawings

[6] One may argue that these constraints are based on physics too. But it should be clear that these constraints are much less dependent on knowledge of physical sciences and more on relations revealed in direct human perception. Therefore this denotes a shift towards a more phenomenal conception of the face recognition process.

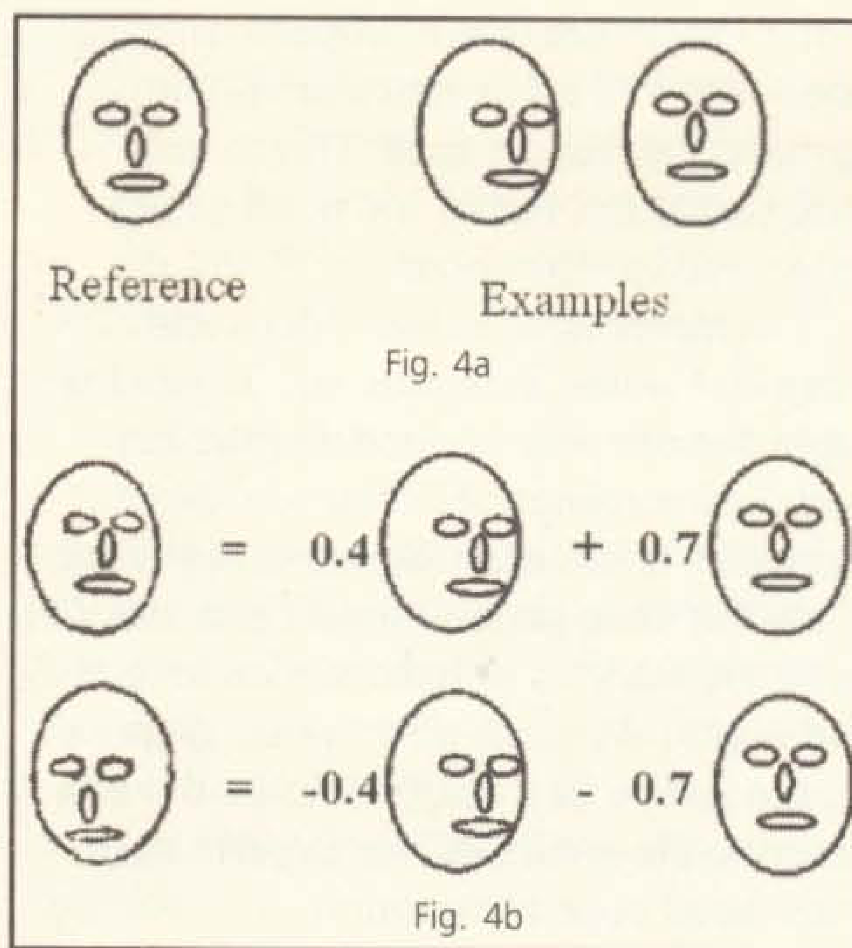


Fig. 4 Using the morphable model to generate new faces

and having two degrees of freedom viz., right-left pose and up-down pose. In order to specify this LMM we need a reference image and the example-images as shown in figure 4a. Once correspondence is established between the reference and each of the example-images, the entire space of poses can be generated through algebraic operations such as shown in figure 4b. Both image correspondence and the algebraic operations are easily implemented on a computer, using image-warping methods. Much more complex morphable models can be defined and applied in other recognition tasks. For the pose recognition task considered here, the LMM defined in figure 3, which we call the pose-LMM, is sufficient.

In the past, LMMs have been used for recognising the identity of faces and their expressions using very complex morphable models that model the detailed appearance of a face. The pose of a face has been considered a much more difficult problem. Here we show that the simple pose-LMM can be used to get reliable, qualitative information about the pose of a face. Once we accept the pose-LMM as the main constraint, the problem of pose recognition can be formulated as one in which we go from an image of a novel face to a point in the pose-LMM (fig. 5). We solve this problem in the following stages:

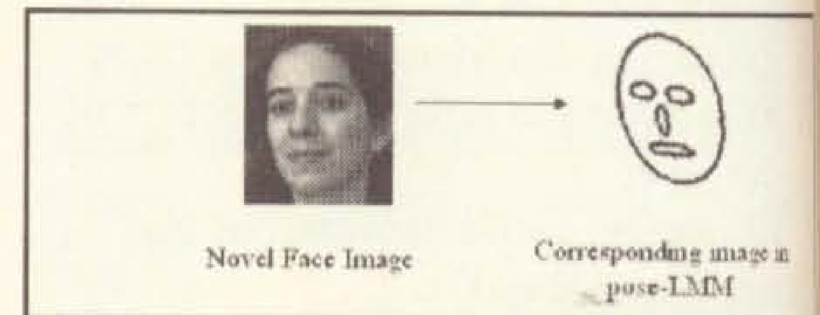


Fig. 5 The pose recognition problem

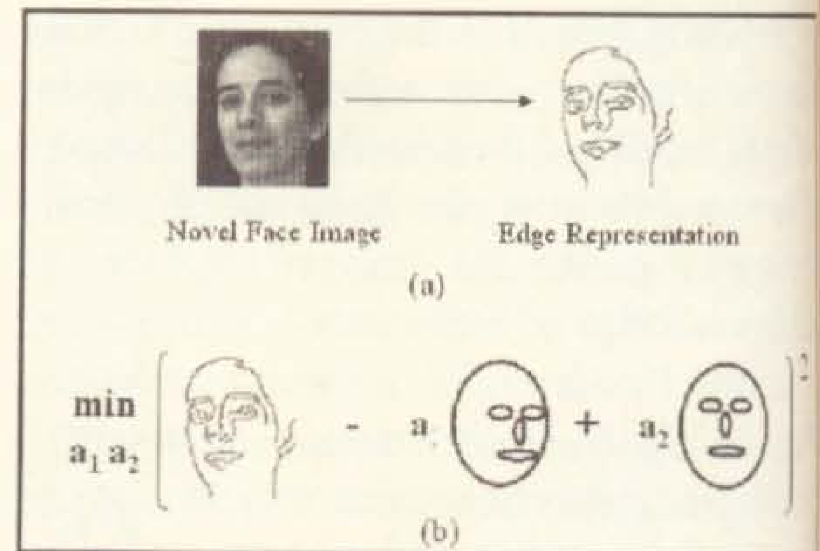


Fig. 6 Algorithm for pose recognition

(1) We first need a line drawing representation of the novel face image. This is approximated by detecting edges in the novel face image. We obtain the edge map by applying a Canny edge detector to the image (fig. 6a).

(2) Next we match the edge image obtained in the previous step to the pose-LMM, i.e., we need to figure out the line drawing in the pose-LMM that best approximates the edge detector output. This is done by formulating the problem as an error minimisation problem over the two parameters of the pose-LMM as shown in figure 6b. We solve this problem using standard gradient descent methods (Jones and Poggio).

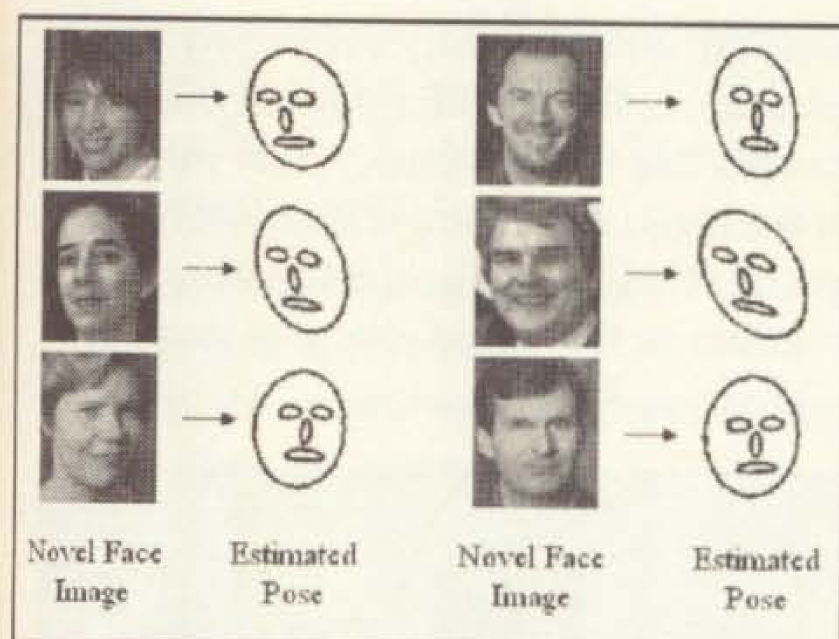


Fig. 7 Results of pose recognition algorithm

In figure 7, we present the results of our constraint-based approach to facial pose estimation. From an engineering perspective, our technique is fast and reliable. Since the system estimates qualitative poses only, more work is needed to evaluate its efficacy in larger embodied systems that do comprehensive facial analysis and possibly other actions. Morphable models are steadily gaining in popularity for several computer vision applications and interesting research questions about them are being asked, e.g., it seems that there exist easily deducible mappings between relative image intensities and morphable models and that one need not always pose the problem of mapping an image to a morphable model in terms of error minimisation. Another area of interest is the plausibility of such models in human perception.

Spatial Cognition

Spatial relations and shape properties are central components of our cognitive systems. The computation of spatial relations and shape properties is important for spatial reasoning (Cohn and Hazarika; Johnson-Laird), navigation (Gallistel), spatial language (Talmy; Jackendoff). The naive view of spatial relations is that they are objective relations between objects in the external world. In this view, the goal of spatial perception is to reflect the objective external properties in the form of an internal representation. Nevertheless, the objectivist view of spatial relations is false. Even the simplest spatial relations are not representations of the external world.

Consider figure 8, consisting of three curves each containing a black dot. The curves vary in shape and size and so does the location of the dots. Yet, most observers would agree that in each of the three curves the dot is "inside" the curve. It is hard to imagine an objective property that defines the reference of the spatial relation "inside."

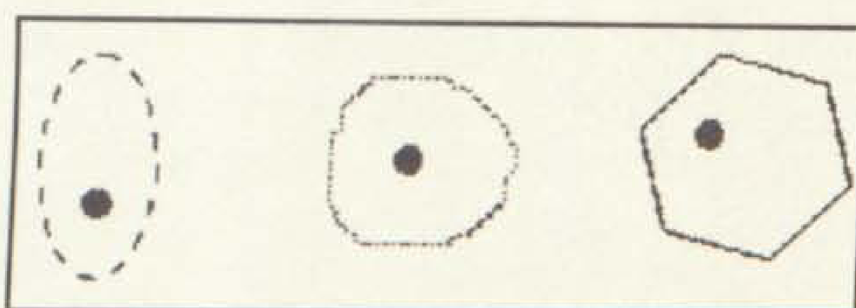


Fig. 8 Three distinct figures consistent with the spatial relation "inside"

Similarly, linguistic representations of space do not map on to an objective external world either. Take the following sentence:

Sunil lives in Chennai.

A person hearing this sentence does not have to know the topography of Chennai in order to understand the spatial relation between Sunil and Chennai. Linguistic representations are typically very schematic and impoverished (Talmy), far from the representational ideal of a pinhole camera. In other words, the geometry of spatial relations is not the same as the geometry of objects in the world. Nevertheless, we do see and talk about spatial relations quite effectively. What are the constraints

binding spatial relations in the world and their representations in our minds? Or to ask the question from the non-dual perspective, what are the non-dual constraints satisfied by spatial relations and their representations?

mind are automatically evoked by spatial relations in the world. Suppose one accepts this thesis, namely, that there is an intrinsic, automatic relation between spatial relations in the mind and spatial relations in the world, one can then ask



Fig. 9

One plausible solution comes from a probabilistic version of a non-dual constraint, which we defined earlier as an intrinsic relation between a mental state and a world entity. In the language of probability, a non-dual constraint is a high probability correlation between a world state and a mental state. For example, "smoke implies fire" is a good inference because smoke has a high probability of being associated with fire. Therefore, the non-dual constraint linking smoke and the thought "fire" can be used to infer the thought "fire" when we see smoke.

One can extend the above argument to the case of spatial relations in general. We argue that spatial relations in the what spatial relations are particularly important, given that the mind and world are tied together from the start?

The basic insight is that of all spatial relations in the world that exist in principle, only those that are strongly tied to some mental spatial representation are even considered by the perceiver. As far as the perceiver is concerned the other spatial relations do not exist. Probabilistic techniques offer an elegant way of formalising the above observation. In the technical literature, the probabilistic formalisation of an intrinsic relation between subject and object is known as the *key feature* constraint (Jepson and Richards). Formally, let P be some property of the

world (say smoke). Let F be a feature of the perceiver (say, the thought "Fire"). Then, the feature F, is said to be a key feature for property P if:

(1) F has a high probability of occurring if P occurs;
(2) F has a low probability of occurring if P does not occur;
(3) P has an a priori non-zero probability of occurring.

For spatial relations, the probabilities correlating mental features and world properties are computed with respect to the various positions that an observer can take with respect to a given configuration of objects in the world – a three-dimensional space with the configuration of objects at the origin. Given two objects A and B, their relative spatial configuration S (A-B), as perceived by an observer, changes each time the observer moves. Therefore, if you have two mental representations M1 (A-B) and M2 (A-B) of S (A-B), then the representation applicable in more locations is the key feature.

To illustrate the above argument, consider the picture in figure 9 above. Suppose you are asked the question "Where is the green plant?" Both of the answers given below are valid answers:

(1) In the right hand corner;
(2) Six feet north and four feet east of the centre of the room.

However, the first answer seems like a much more plausible human response. The key feature constraint allows us to understand why response 1 is preferable to response 2. The reason is that the cognitive representation "In the right hand corner" is valid over a large number of viewing positions. Even if a person is far away or is walking around the room, the plant is still in the same corner. On the other hand, response 2 is conditioned on the ability to make a precise assessment of the distance between objects, an ability that humans beings do not have unless they are in the room itself, measuring the distance. As a result the spatial representation "In the right hand corner" is a key feature for the above image while "Six feet north and four feet east of the centre" is not.

One can extend the above analysis and classify all spatial relations according to their invariance under observer motion. If one does so, we get three broad categories (in order of decreasing invariance): Coordinate Frames, Topological Structure, and Metric Structure. A short description of the members of these categories is given below.

(1) **Coordinate Frame Representations**: Coordinate Frame Representations are qualitative representations of layout, i.e., they represent the background against which all other measurements or actions are made. Important examples of coordinate frames are the *Gravitational Frame*, the Universal Vertical Frame defined by gravitation and *Blob-Location*, denoting the existence of an unstructured object (a blob) at a particular location.
(2) **Topological Structure Representations**: Topological Representations represent features that do not change when the viewpoint of the observer changes due to motion or when the underlying configuration of objects is stretched, pulled, expanded. Examples of topological representations are *Blobs* (undifferentiated connected objects) and *Dimension* (the inherent dimension of an object, i.e., whether

it is zero, one, two or three dimensional). More subtle topological representations denote *Generic Spatial Invariants*, those spatial invariants that do not change when the stimulus is perturbed slightly. For example, *Containment* and *Closure* are generic invariants. *Non-generic Invariants* are those spatial invariants that change when perturbed along certain directions. However, non-generic invariants are still topological invariants because they do not depend on metric properties of surfaces. *Contact* is a good example of a non-generic invariant.

(3) **Metric Structure Representations**: These representations denote features that may change with the observer's location or when the shape of the underlying object changes. Therefore, Metric Structure Representations are quantitative, unlike the previous two categories that are qualitative. Examples of metric structure representations are *Global Properties*, such as Area and Diameter, i.e., properties of an object as a whole.

We can use the key feature constraint to make predictions about spatial relations encoded in language and perception. At any given time, an animal can sense only a small subset of the world. Let us call the directly sensible portion of the world the *local environment*. For human visual perception, the local environment is the region of space in front of the human being, typically consisting of objects neither too small nor too big. The local environment for visual perception does not include the structure of much larger spaces such as the structure of a city or of a country or very small objects like dust particles.

On the other hand, language does not have a local environment because we typically talk about things we do not see. In the absence of an immediate locally sensible environment, we should expect language to represent only those spatial properties that are valid in all environments.

Using the key feature constraint, we should make the following prediction:

> *Key Feature Hypothesis – Perceptual representations for navigation and spatial reasoning should go from representing maximally key properties (such as "blobs") to representing the minimally key properties (the detailed shape). Linguistic Representations should be highly biased towards representing only the maximally key properties.*

Experiments on animals with relatively primitive visual systems, such as ants and frogs, have demonstrated their ability to use coordinate frames and topological structures (Gallistel). Frogs snap at all moving blobs irrespective of the detailed shape of the blob. Frogs can also detect if a curve is closed or open, suggesting that topological information is of importance to frogs while metric information is not. The primacy of topological structure and coordinate frames is not restricted to simpler visual systems. In humans, the detection of topological and coordinate frame information is effortless and immediate (Ullman).

Support for the key feature hypothesis also comes from looking at the geometric meaning of English prepositions. For simplicity, let us assume that each preposition has a

default, geometric meaning.[7] For example, the default meaning of "in" is *containment*, which is a generic topological relation. A classification of prepositions is given in table 1. The table shows that the overwhelming majority of prepositions have a default meaning from the Gravitational Frame, Blob, Generic Invariant and Principal Axis levels. None of the prepositions have any metric structure whatsoever.

To summarise, the above arguments suggest that empirical data about spatial relations can be predicted by using a probabilistic version of a non-dual constraint, namely, the key feature constraint. Our results on spatial relations along with the results on object recognition are a first step in showing how non-duality can be used to derive scientific models of cognitive phenomena. Further work is needed before we can say conclusively whether non-duality is central to cognitive science.

Conclusions and Future Work

This paper was an attempt to understand and explore the concept of non-duality from a scientific perspective. The scientific approach to non-duality suggests that the philosophical concerns of Indian thought are relevant to modern cognitive science. In our paper we have shown how the formal notion of a non-dual constraint can provide a good framework to study perception. In this paper, we have applied the notion of a non-dual constraint to understand two specific examples of perception, namely, object recognition and spatial perception. Since these problems also happen to be computationally well posed, this allows us to suggest novel constraint-based computational techniques for solving them.

However, in general, the framework of constraints only provides a theoretical basis. At this stage, we have only shown the value of our intuitions in specific perceptual contexts. The next harder step is to show that there is some structure to the space of constraints, i.e., there is a systematic relationship between the various kinds of constraints such as key features, morphable models, etc. We think that a systematic classification of constraints is one of the more important topics for future investigation.

Furthermore, we have not incorporated the insights into non-duality from the Indic contemplative traditions. A complementary investigation based on experiential concerns is needed in order to create a true dialogue.

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[7] This is not an implausible assumption. In any case, the arguments for the hypothesis do not depend on the validity of this assumption.

[8] See Table 1, p. 224. Gravitational Frame (GF) is the universal vertical frame defined by gravitation. Blob-Location (BL) represents a blob at a particular location. Principal Axis-Location (PA) represents a principal axis of an object at a given location while Minor Axis-Location (MA) represents a minor axis at a given location. Blobs (B) are undifferentiated spatial representations, with no internal structure. Generic Spatial Invariants (GI) are those spatial invariants that do not change when the stimulus is perturbed slightly. Non-generic Invariants (NGI) are those spatial invariants that change when perturbed along certain directions.

Preposition	*about*	*above*	*across*	*after*	*against*	*along*	*alongside*	*amid*	*among*	*around*	*at*
Central Meaning	N/A	GF	GI	N/A	NGI	MA	MA	GI	GI	GI	BL
Preposition	*atop*	*behind*	*below*	*beneath*	*beside*	*between*	*betwixt*	*beyond*	*by*	*down*	*from*
Central Meaning	BL	MA	GF	GF	MA	GI	GI	GI	N/A	GF	BL
Preposition	*in*	*inside*	*into*	*near*	*nearby*	*off*	*on*	*onto*	*opposite*	*out*	*outside*
Central Meaning	GI	GI	GI	GI	GI	GI	NGI	NGI	MA	GI	GI
Preposition	*over*	*past*	*through*	*throughout*	*to*	*toward*	*underneath*	*under*	*up*	*upon*	*via*
Central Meaning	GF	N/A	GI	GI	BL	BL	MA	MA	GF	BL	BL
Preposition	*with*	*within*	*without*	*afterward*	*apart*	*away*	*back*	*backward*	*downstairs*	*downward*	*east*
Central Meaning	N/A	GI	GI	N/A	GI	GI	N/A	MA	GF	GF	MA
Preposition	*forward*	*here*	*inward*	*left*	*north*	*outward*	*right*	*sideways*	*south*	*there*	*together*
Central Meaning	MA	BL	GI	MA	MA	GI	MA	MA	MA	BL	NGI
Preposition	*upstairs*	*upward*	*west*								
Central Meaning	GF	GF	MA								

*Table 1 Default meaning of English prepositions

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essay

The Fifth Aim of Life: In Search of the Medieval

Nupur Chaudhuri and Rajat Kanta Ray

I

WHAT DO MEN SEEK in this life and thereafter? What did Prince Siddhartha seek when he forsook his kingdom, his wife and child? In the centuries following his nirvana, Indian civilisation has dealt with this query by identification and classification of the aims of life. Thus developed the concept of the *Purusharthas* (*purusha* or man; *artha* or aim) or the aims of man. This developing discourse makes it possible for us to periodise the history of Indian civilisation on the basis of a changing mentality. An ancient Sanskrit verse defines "history" thus:

> *dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣānām-upadesha samanvitam*
> *purva-vritta-kathā-yuktam-itihasaṁ prachakśate.*
> (Bandyopadhyay, look under "itihasa")

History is a narrative of past events containing advice on dharma, *artha*, *kama* and moksha. The Brahmanical social order of antiquity was ideologically based on the scheme of *trivarga* or the three aims of life. The *trivarga* meant the three *purusharthas* of the *grihi* (householder): dharma (righteousness), *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (pleasure). Slightly later, the three-fold scheme expanded into the *chaturvarga* (four-fold scheme) and came to include moksha or liberation as the fourth *purushartha*, an aim of life appropriate for the sannyasi (renouncer). What we call the medieval age witnessed a further development – the emergence of *prema* (love) or *bhakti* (devotion) as the fifth *purushartha*. We wish here to approach the medieval age not so much in terms of its economic or political institutions as its emerging mental determinants. To make out a medieval, however, we must begin with antiquity.

One of the first references to *purushartha* in its technical sense occurs in the *Manusamhita*, a Sanskrit text written a few centuries after the passing of the

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Buddha. Manu, the early Brahmanical legislator, equates *purushartha* with *prayojana* or need, purpose, aim (Tarkaratna 179; VII.100). This is a departure from the twin epics' equation of the word *purushartha* with *purushakara* (manliness) as opposed to *daiva* (fate):

> *Daivaṁ purusakareṇa ko vanchaytum-arhati.*
>
> who can resist fate by mean of manliness? (*Mahabharata* III.179.271; also see *Ramayana* V.2.35)

While both the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* talk about *purushartha* in the sense of manliness or *purushakara*, the *Manusamhita* means by it the aims of life, and spells out the constituents of the three-fold *purushartha* scheme: if a king wields the rod, *danda*, justly, then the *trivarga*, consisting of dharma, *artha* and *kama*, flourishes (Tarkaratna 170; VII.27).

Later texts such as the *Agni Purana* expanded the *trivarga* scheme into a four-fold scheme or *chaturvarga* that now incorporated moksha as a *purushartha*:

> *Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣash-cha-puruṣārthā udahritāh.* (*Agni Purana* as ctd. in Bandyopadhyay, look under "purushartha")

The appearance of *trivarga* and its slightly later elaboration as *chaturvarga* was intimately associated with the development of the Brahmanical system in the early centuries of the Christian era. This period saw the rise to ideological predominance of certain scriptures collectively referred to as *dharmarthakamashastrani*, consisting of texts such as the *Manusamhita*, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* and Vatsyayana's *Kamasutra*.

Purushartha became an important determinant of the developed Brahmanical order. Notably different from the earlier Vedic sacrificial system, the new orthodoxy strongly defended the Vedas against the Buddhist challenge. Manu's legislative injunctions invoked a social order consisting of the *chatur-varnya* (four *varnas*), the *chatur-ashrama* (four ashramas) and the *trayo-lokah* (three worlds of heaven, earth and hell). All these and the past, present and future are derived, as Manu explained, from the Vedas:

> *Chātur-varṇyaṁ trayo lokāh chatvāraḥ ashramāḥ prithak Bhutaṁ – bhavad – bhaviṣyam – cha sarvam vedāt prasiddhati.* (Tarkaratna 351; XII.97)

Manu prescribed a set of *purusharthas* appropriate for each of the four distinct stages of the life of a man who belonged to one of the three higher *varnas*. *Kama* (sex) was forbidden in the *brahmacharya* ashrama (the disciple's stage of life). Once the disciple passed into the *grihasthya ashrama* (the householder's stage of life), reproduction was deemed to be part of his dharma (sacred duty). *Kama* then became as important an aim of life as dharma and *artha*. It was obligatory for the householder to pursue all three *purusharthas* together. The householder stage was essential to produce sons (which amounted to the discharge of the *pitra-rina* or debt to the ancestors).

It was also the precondition for the due performance of the sacrificial rites which could not be completed without the participation of a wife (this amounted to the discharge of the *deva-rina* or debt to the gods). The *trivarga* (three aims) no longer applied in the stages of the *vanaprastha* (stage of the forest recluse) and the *sannyasa* (stage

of the renouncer).[1] Moksha was the sole *purushartha* prescribed for the stage of *sannyasa*, to the exclusion of dharma (sacrificial rites), *artha* (wealth) and *kama* (pleasure).

Moksha, which appears to have developed from the Buddha's nirvana, was a somewhat different, and Brahmanical, version of liberation from the cycle of birth and rebirth. Manu's concept of the four ashramas accorded primacy to the householder's stage of life. He was emphatic that *sannyasa* was posterior to and contingent upon *brahmacharya* and *grihasthya*, and subject to the prior discharge of the *rishi-rina*, *deva-rina* and *pitra-rina* or the three debts to the sages, the gods and the ancestors (Tarkaratna 157; VI.35). The discharge of the debt to the sages required the study of the Vedas and the practice of continence (i.e., abstention from sex), which must last through the disciple's stage of life. The discharge of the debt to the gods required the due performance of *yajna* (sacrificial rites) by the householder in the company of his lawfully wedded wife. The debt to the ancestors in its turn required producing sons in the legally wedded wife's womb (Tarkaratna 157; XI.36). Not until these debts had been paid might a man turn to seek release from *samsara*, i.e. the world, a phenomenal existence full of suffering and subject to karma, which dictates the process of birth and rebirth. Manu's model of the four ashramas had no room therefore for a professional class of sannyasis (renouncers) as distinct from *grihis* (householders). Nor did moksha have, in this early Brahmanical scheme, the ideological predominance it came to acquire in late antiquity.

The Brahmanical religious texts ordained certain purificatory rites to be performed by the *grihis* of the three upper *varnas*. By keeping womenfolk and the Shudras out of the orbit of the various purificatory rites, the Brahmanical social order set them apart as a breed inferior to the *dvija* or "twice born," i.e., the men belonging to three upper *varnas* wearing the sacred thread. Only the twice born were entitled to study the Vedas and the *Manavadharmashastra* and no one else (Tarkaratna 21-22, 29; II.16, II.69). Marriage was the only sacred rite to be practised by the womenfolk and the Shudras (Tarkaratna 28; II.67). Manu was very clear that these systemic arrangements would be kept in place by the eternal power of *danda* (the power of the rod) and by the *raja* (king) who happened to wield it at the time. The rod in his view was the representative of the four ashramas and the dharma (Tarkaratna 169; VII.17). The king would employ the Vaishya and the Shudra in their respective duties and the Brahmin would make the Shudra work for him as a servant (Tarkaratna 246; VIII.413, 419). In this patriarchal and hierarchical system, a wife, a son or a slave were not entitled to their earnings, which belonged by right to their lord (Tarkaratna 246; VIII.416). The rod upheld all authority; without it there would be no lordship – *svāmyaṁ-cha na syāt kasmiṁ-shchit* – and the Shudras would annihilate the Brahmins and the higher castes (Tarkaratna 169; VII.21).

It was within this prescribed system that men were called upon to pursue the "man-aims." Hence *purushartha* was an important aspect of the dharma ordained

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[1] In the centuries following Manu, the stage of *vanaprastha* fell into disuse and *sannyasa* acquired greater ideological hold over the whole of the Brahmanical society.

by Manu or *manava-dharma*. Honoured as the *sanatana-dharma* or eternal religion, as distinct from the *sad-dharma* or true creed of the Buddhists, this post-Buddhist Brahmanical patriarchy was, technically, the *varnasharmadharma* (Olivelle 137). This was the orthodox order that gradually erased the heterodox Buddhist social vision of earlier times, and successfully substituted for it the prescribed *purusharthas*. As Vatsyayana spelt them out in around 200 CE, a man should attend to the three aims of life in such a way that they support rather than hinder each other:

> *Vālye vidyāgrahana-ādinān-arthān. Kāmaṁ-cha-yauvane. Stavire dharma-mokṣaṁ-cha*
>
> In childhood, the wealth of learning etc.; in youth, pleasure; in old age, righteousness and liberation. (Vatsayayana 21-22; II. 2, 3, 4)

In contrast to the persistent doctrines that *samsara* (existence) is *dukkha* (suffering), this implied a certain balance and a sense of proportion. However, Manu, who slightly earlier had taken a more orthodox view of the matter, warned that the pursuit of any type of wealth or pleasure that turned out to be devoid of righteousness should be avoided:

> *Parityajed-artha-kāmau yau syātāṁ dharma-varjitau.* (Tarkaratna 157; VI.36)

But for him, too, the pride of place belonged to dharma and not moksha; and *artha* and *kama* were deemed to be essential accompaniments of dharma. What is sometimes conceived as the classical civilisation of India, said to have flourished around the middle of the first millennium, did not display the characteristic preoccupation with the bondage of illusory existence and release for suffering which gained ideological predominance in late antiquity.

As a philosophical discourse developed within the Brahmanical system, moksha gradually came to be apotheosised in place of dharma.[2] The earlier complementary stages of life, which placed renunciation at the very end of it, gave way to an emphatic distinction between the two opposite categories of the *grihi* and the sannyasi, one pursuing sacred rites, wealth and pleasure, and the other pursuing liberation to the exclusion of all else. The process may be said to have culminated with the institution of the Dashnami Naga Sannyasis by Shankara in the ninth century, and the exposition of his extreme *advaita-vada* (monistic non-dualism) that dismissed the whole of this existence as *maya-mayam-idam akhilam* (an illusion).

Historically, the concept of moksha may be traced back to the Buddha's notion of nirvana, and the even earlier conception of *amrita* in the Vedas and the Upanishads. Originally, Vedic sacrificial rites had aimed at the attainment of *amrita* (immortality) in *svarga* (heaven). In the post-Vedic period, the priests, influenced by the Buddhist, Jain and Ajivika monks, adopted the new notions of *samsara* (human existence subject to rebirth and a state of bondage and suffering); karma (ritual and moral actions which determine the process of rebirth and the next form of existence); and moksha (liberation from the cycle of births and deaths). *Yajna* (sacrifice), the karma par excellence, far from being a

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[2] See the exposition of the discourse on moksha in the Uma Shankar Sharma ed., *Sarva-Darshana-Samgraha of Madhavacharya* 492-501.

source of immortality, was recognised as the cause of human bondage, and *sannyasa* (theology of renunciation) was defined as the abandonment of ritual activities which ensnared men in the cycle of rebirth, and involved them in constant passages through the three worlds of earth, heaven and hell (Olivelle 37-38, 62-63). The new notions were designed by the Brahmins to meet the ideological challenge of the Buddhists and the other heterodox sects.

From early times, however, there was persistent popular criticism of the Brahmanical vision of life and its aims. The critics did not spare the concept of liberation. There developed a materialistic discourse which invoked the sage Charvaka. All sorts of startling pronouncements were attributed to him. On the evidence of *The Essential Collection of All the Philosophies*,[3] drawn up by Madhava in the fourteenth century, the nihilistic views were popular at the time. Among the more scandalous sayings of Charvaka, one stood the *purusharthas* on its head:

> *anganā-ālinganāj-janya-sukham-eva pumarthatā*
>
> The pleasure gained by intercourse with woman is verily the aim of man. (Sharma 10)

As for liberation, the atheistic sage is said to have pronounced:

> *Dehasya nāsho muktis-tu na jnānān muktir-ishyate*
>
> The annihilation of the body is indeed what passes off as liberation, there is no liberation by means of wisdom. (Sharma 10)

The majority of men, therefore, wished to live happily so long as life lasted, for death would catch up with everyone. In other words:

> *yāvaj-jived sukhaṁ jīvet, nāsti mṛtyor-agocharaḥ.* (Sharma 3)

In this nihilistic view, there is no heaven, no liberation, no survival of the self after death, and the rites associated with *varnashrama* are fruitless:

> *Na svargo na-apavargo vā naivātmā pāralaukikah,*
> *Naiva varna-āshrama-ādinam kriyāsh-cha phaladayikāh.* (Sharma 22)

Indeed, the popular belief is said to have been that wealth and pleasure alone are the aims men pursue: *artha-kāmau dva puruṣārthau* (Sharma 3). An ironical allusion to the *ashvamedha yajna* (horse sacrifice) which required the sacrificer's wife to unite with the sacrificed horse hinted that the Brahmanical creed was one in which the horse's organ was the wife's object:

> *Ashvasya – atra hi shishnaṁ tu patni – grāhyam prakirtitam.* (Sharma 24)

The *yajna* (sacrifices) and the *veda* (scriptures) had no substance (Sharma 7), and would bring neither heavenly bliss nor ultimate liberation.

A modified version of folk materialism formulated immortality as the ultimate man-aim, but took this in a literal sense, as the indefinite postponement of death by the use of mercury and the control of breath (Sharma 380). Since the dead might never feel their release, only the living would feel liberation. Ergo, there is no liberation after death: *jīva-mokṣa-anyathā tu na* (Sharma 385). *Deha-nityatvam* or the eternity of the body is

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[3] Or the Uma Shankar Sharma ed., *Sarva-Darshana-Samgraha of Madhavacharya* 3. This was the first comprehensive exposition of the philosophical system extant in India at the time.

the object of those who desire *purushartha* (Sharma 387). The deathless body may be attained by means of yoga, and that is how the ultimate is realised and the man-aim is achieved:

> *Divyam deham̐ sampādya yoga-abhyāsa-vashāt-para-tattve – drshṭe puruṣārtha-prāptir-bhavati.* (Sharma 389)

This particular discourse on the aim of life was identified by Madhava as Raseshvara-darshana, or the Philosophy of the Supreme Fluid. The beliefs associated with it, especially the efficacy of the use of mercury, would appear to have passed into Tantra in late antiquity. The critical pronouncement of the doctrine which he cites is as follows:

> *Āyatanam̐ vidyānām̐ mūlam̐ dharma – artha – kāma – mokṣāṇām.*
> *Shreyah param̐ kim – anyach – chharīram – ajara – amaram̐ vihāyaikam*
>
> The root of all learning, of righteousness, wealth, pleasure and liberation, is the youthful, immortal body; what can be better or greater than that? (Sharma 387)

Brahmanical philosophers felt no qualms in using Buddhist logic to demolish these popular, materialistic, *nastika* (nihilist) beliefs, but were of course absolutely opposed to Buddhism, which they correctly identified as the principal threat to their own philosophical systems.[4] In particular they were opposed to the Madhyamika (Buddhist) doctrine that the destruction of the *atman* (self) was the end of all *dukkha* (suffering). The Buddhists took this to be liberation: *Ātmach-chhedo mokṣa iti mādhyamika-mate duhkhachchhedo asti* (Sharma 492). The orthodox system of Brahmanical philosophy, which subscribed to the durability of the self, maintained, on the contrary, that liberation was in essence a state of happiness; or alternatively, *duḥkha nivṛttir-eva muktih* – the extinction of sorrow (Sharma 498-99). Shankara resolved these disputes by ruling that the state of liberation could not be profitably compared to either happiness or misery; living men might attain the state by realising the illusory character of earthly existence and its joys and sorrows (Sharma 762). This was perilously close to the Buddhist doctrine he had set out to demolish.

With the rise of Bhakti in late antiquity, and especially after the challenge posed to Shankara's Advaita (monism) by Ramanuja's Vishishtaadvaita (qualified monism) and Madhva's Dvaita (dualism) in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the Bhaktas (devotees) rounded upon Shankara as a *prachachhana Bauddha* (disguised Buddhist) whose doctrine of Maya (illusion) offered but a false and slippery path to liberation (Babaji 317; ch. 18). Bhakti entered into a high philosophical discourse with Ramanuja, and was carried forward by Madhva in a sustained challenge to Shankara. If, as Shankara contended, the *atman* (self), like everything else, is an illusion, too, then there would be no scope for the *bhakti* (heart-felt devotion) of individual worshippers to a Brahman (an ultimate reality). Neither Ramanuja, nor Madhva, would accept Shankara's contention that a man may gain moksha only upon realising the twin concepts, namely,

> *Ajnātam̐ vishayo brahma, jnātam̐ tach-cha prayojanam*

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[4] See Madhava's chapter on Buddhism, which he adroitly counterpoised to refute Charvaka (Sharma 26-103).

> The ultimate reality is beyond knowledge, and life's aim is to know this. (Sharma 447)

Ramanuja equated *bhakti* with a state of *niratishaya ananda* (ultimate joy) in which no other *prayojana* (aim) remained but the joyous sense of the presence of the *priya* or beloved (Sharma 237). By means of devotion, it would be possible for the *atman* to attain the Brahman which is "the ultimate *purushartha* of all beings" (Sharma 240, 244). That, for Ramanuja, was moksha, which was the highest aim of life (Sharma 229, 230). He was emphatic, however, that this liberation was *vimokah kāmānabhiṣvangaḥ* or a passionless release in which there would be no desire (Sharma 238). Liberation is a calm state in which the distinction between the self and the ultimate being disappears. In this Ramanuja remained, like Shankara, a non-dualist.

Madhva, who unlike his predecessor Ramanuja looked upon the *atman* and the Brahman as two distinct entities, also believed in the transforming power of *bhakti* (Sharma 267). And he, too, continued to look upon moksha as the highest aim:

> *dharma-artha-kāma sarve-api na nityā, mokṣaṁ-eva hi*
>
> Righteouness, wealth, pleasure, none of them last, only liberation is forever. (Sharma 272)

This, the highest of all goals, is not possible to gain but for the blessing of Vishnu: *moksaṣh-cha Viṣṇu-prasādam-antarena na labhyate* (Sharma 272). As proof of this he cited a well-known saying from the *Vishnu Purana*: "With His blessing, what remains inaccessible on earth? *Dharma*, *artha* and *kama* are but small things, by taking refuge in the illimitable tree of brahman, even the fruit called *mukti* comes within reach" (Sharma 272).[5]

This is still classical Brahmanism, unmistakably so despite the visible growth in the element of *bhakti* since its first intellectual manifestation in the *Bhagavadgita* of yore. And all this is far removed from the passionate, emotional world of the medieval devotee. It is, in fact, far closer to Shankara's philosophical discourse. The real break would come afterwards, after, that is, the coming of the Muslims, and the spread of *tasawwuf* in Hind. Neither Ramanuja nor Madhva ever equated *bhakti* (devotion) with *prema* (love), certainly not with passionate, erotic love. Neither treated *bhakti* as an aim in itself, an aim separate from moksha. To the principal philosophers of late antiquity, the *bhakti-marga* (path of devotion) is a lesser path than the *jnana-marga* (path of knowledge), and devotion is merely another means, meant for lesser mortals, to liberation.

Love, passionate, erotic love, comes afterwards, especially after the rise of Islam. The presence of the Sufis might have been a factor in this. Closer at hand, there was the *Bhagavata Purana*, composed in the south, and the entire Tamil Alvar tradition, embodied especially in the lovelorn girl Andal. *Viraha* (pangs of separation) and *prema* (love) sprang to the forefront in the *bhakti* designed by the Tamil devotees, and was set forth afterwards in the more classically oriented Sanskrit verse of the *Bhagavata Purana*, composed in the ninth century.[6] However, and this is crucial, Radha had still not appeared in that work. If any one thing is central to

[5] *Mukti* here is a synonym for moksha, meaning release, liberation.

the movement which culminated with Chaitanya in fifteenth century Bengal, it is the appearance of Radha. Indeed, Chaitanya is said to have been an avatar of Radha and Krishna in their united state.

II

With the appearance of Radha in the *Brahmavaivartapurana* and her hundred-year *viraha*, a new *purushartha* begins to take shape. This new aim would constitute a challenge to the ideological and social order of Brahmanism, its *varnashrama*, its *chaturvarga*, its denial of moksha to women and Shudras.[7] The new man-aim called *prema* (love), one that is no longer confined to the *purusha* (male) of the upper caste alone, would be given a higher place than the existing *chaturvarga*: dharma, *artha*, *kama* and moksha. The rise and development of *prema* between the thirteenth and seventeenth centuries signified a transition to a new ideological order as much as it represented a changing mentality. If we are to try and periodise the historical evolution of India's civilisation on the basis of its mental determinants, then this may, like the former emergence of *chaturvarga* in the early centuries of the Christian era, be regarded as yet another turning point. Conceptually, it may be useful to locate the medieval in this new transition.

The rise of the vernacular languages was no less important than the coming of Islam in the articulation of the fifth *purushartha* – a passionate, erotic *bhakti* (devotion) that distinguishes what we may call in this connection the medieval period. This emotional type of *bhakti* (as distinct from the intellectual *bhakti* of the *Bhagavadgita* and the *Vishnu Purana*) originated in the Tamil tradition before the coming of Islam, and reached its full form in the Bengali vernacular poetry of the period of the Muslim rulers of Gaur. This period witnessed a high level of theorisation in Sanskrit poetics newly spelt out by the Goswamis of Vrindavan, who were Bengali Brahmin followers of Shri Chaitanya.

In Tamil poetry which embodies the early record of Krishna devotion in the south, we find arguments in favour of *kama* (*inpam*) put in the mouth of a girl: "The imperishable Vedas proclaim the four-fold good path exalted in the world: *aram* (dharma), *porul* (*artha*), *inpam* (*kama*), *vitu* (moksha)." But she dismissed ascetics who strive for moksha through self-mortification since they are "people with small minds who say these things without being able to prove them." As for dharma, the reward of which is heaven, that too leads only to the enjoyment of heavenly damsels. Thus the fruit of dharma, too, is *kama*. She then turns to *artha*, and finds in it a means to the same end: splendid wealth only buys *kama* (i.e., pleasure). The girl can draw only one logical conclusion: "Therefore we shall pursue the firmly established path of *kamam* alone." But *inpam* (*kamam*) would be directed

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[6] For further details, see Friedhelm Hardy, *Viraha-Bhakti: The Early History of Krishna Devotion in South India* 26-27, 38-40, 568. Hardy makes a distinction between the intellectual *bhakti* of antiquity and the emotional *bhakti* of the ninth century Tamils

[7] Pandita Ramabai had pointed out in 1907: "The woman has no right to study the Vedas and Vedanta and without knowing them, no one can know the Brahma; without knowing Brahma no one can get liberation, therefore no women can get liberation, that is Moksha" (302-03).

towards God and not a mortal. In this fashion *kama* might be converted into *bhakti* (Hardy 389-90). The terminology deployed here is still confined within the *chaturvarga* scheme of antiquity. The invention of the fifth aim of man is a later development, coinciding with the coming of Islam and the rise of the Indo-Aryan vernacular languages, especially Bengali. But the Alvars had prepared the ground for the next and higher level of theorisation of *bhakti*. A blend of *viraha*, *prema* and *kama*, the new devotional cult dominated Bengali vernacular poetry with its strong Muslim component and was given doctrinal definition in the Sanskrit poetics of the disciples of Chaitanya known as the Vrindavan Goswamis.

Two Bengali vernacular narratives, the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* of Krishnadas Kabiraj (a biography of Chaitanya written in verse in the sixteenth century) and the *Bhaktamala Grantha* of Laldas Babaji (a seventeenth century adaptation of the earlier Hindi text of Nabhaji containing biographical sketches of numerous *bhaktas* or devotees), carried forth the idea of this new *bhakti* and made it equivalent to *prema*. In the process, *prema* was elevated to the status of the fifth and final *purusha-artha* (man-aim), but one made available to women, and to every man. In the medieval Vaishnava lore, this would dominate over the other *purusharthas*.

What exactly is the fifth aim of man? There are two definitions, one by Krishnadas Kabiraj, the other by Laldas Babaji. Krishnadas offers the following explanation:

> Prema for Krishna is a purushartha compared to which the four purusharthas are as insignificant as blades of grass. The fifth purushartha is prema, the joyous ocean of immortality compared to which the happiness from knowing Brahma is like a drop in the ocean. (Kabiraj 51; *Adi Lila*, ch. 7, v. 160-64)

The next important and specific definition occurs in the Bengali text of the *Bhaktamala*:

> *pancham purushartha Krishna prem prayojan*
>
> The fifth man-aim is the goal [called] love of Krishna. (Babaji 324; ch. 18)

The Vaishnavas of Bengal and the Bhakti movement in medieval India declared the supremacy of *prema* over dharma, *artha*, *kama* and even moksha. The classical *purushartha* theory had advocated the simultaneous and balanced pursuit of dharma, *artha* and *kama*, but had set up a contradiction between dharma, *artha* and *kama*, on the one hand, and moksha, on the other. Thereby, the *grihasthya ashrama* (householder's stage of life) had been formally split off from the *sannyasa ashrama* (stage of renunciation). But *prema* changed the parameters and cancelled the distinction. The householder was deemed eminently worthy of pursuing the spiritual objective defined as *prema*. Since medieval Bhakti ordained that the greatest *purushartha* was *prema* and not moksha, the renouncer's spiritual superiority over the householder was cancelled in the new ideological scheme. Renunciation might enable an individual to gain liberation but it would not suffice to attain the highest *purushartha*. *Prema* the fifth aim of life reintegrated all the *purusharthas* under its own supremacy, and since it was possible to pursue it as a householder, it posed a challenge to the sannyasis and their ideology. The Dashnami Naga order established by Shankara found a formidable opponent in the cult of Bhakti.

Shri Chaitanya is said to have pronounced on one occasion: "Shri Krishna is the Lord Incarnate. Love and devotion for him is the highest *purushartha*. I consider *prema-bhakti* to be the highest goal on the path of passion (*raga-marga*)" (Nath, *Antyalila*, ch. 7, v. 20-21).

In the same vein, the *Bhaktamala* declares: "The dust [of the feet] of the devotees is the only goal, to the exclusion of righteousness, wealth, pleasure and liberation." And the devotee declares to the supreme lord Krishna: "What should I want more than you? Fie upon merit (*dharma*), wealth (*artha*), pleasure (*kama*) and liberation" (Babaji 243; ch.13).

The reasoning behind this is as follows. The practice of dharma through the performance of *yajna* (sacrificial rites) would lead only to the attainment of heaven. But what does heaven afford to the merit-seekers? The delights of heaven, declares the *Bhaktamala*, is but the indulgences of the swine. Intense *bhakti* rises above such base pleasures and unites the devotee with Lord Krishna (Babaji 140; ch. 7). Hence devotion is the highest aim to be achieved by man, an aim higher than dharma, which is attained through karma (rites), *brata* (vows) and *yajna* (sacrifice); and higher even than moksha, which is achieved by *jnana* or knowledge, *japa* or meditation and *tapa* or austerity (Babaji 134; ch. 6).

What is the nature of the new ideal of love? In answering this question, the *Bhaktamala* spells out that he who wants liberation is not worthy of devotion to Krishna. What the true devotee seeks is "a singularly pure devotion that is shorn of all desire (*nishkam*), and the fruit of which is love and eros (*prema-rati*)" (Babaji 323; ch. 18). In this the text followed a newly instituted distinction between *prema* (love) and *kama* (desire), which are admitted to be akin to each other. This crucial medieval distinction formed the basis of the glorification of *prema* as the supreme aim of life. An oft-quoted verse of the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* spells out the distinction:

> Whereas kama is the fulfilment of one's selfish desires, prema is an attempt to please the senses of Lord Krishna himself. (Kabiraj 25; *Adilila*, ch. 4, v. 278)

In thus magnifying the glory of *prema*, Krishnadas Kabiraj belittles the traditional third *purushartha*, namely *kama*, and elevates love to an extra-sensory, supernatural status that is rid of the base, self-centred gratification of one's own sexual pleasure. In the same vein, the Vaishnava poets and lyricists of Bengal defined love as self-sacrifice for the beloved: "My happiness lies in your being happy, so I bear all these sorrows and scandal does not weigh me down" (*Shri-Shri-Padakalpataru* 230; IV, 33. 2939).[8] Medieval love bestowed the highest distinction on that eros which was dedicated to the lover's pleasure (rather than one's own), because it conferred *mahabhava* or the ultimate spiritual bliss.[9]

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[8] *Shri-Shri-Padakalpataru* is a collection of songs compiled in the eighteenth century. The verse translated above is by Rai Basanta: "*Tua sukhe sukhi hoi, e sakal dukha soi, ki koribe apajash kaj.*"

[9] Rupa Goswami's work of Sanskrit poetics, written between 1541-50, reflected the new ideal of self-sacrifice in the distinction it made between three kinds of eros: *sadharani* (for one's own enjoyment), *samanjasa* (occasionally for one's own enjoyment) and *samartha* (entirely for the lover's pleasure). For details refer to Rupa Goswami, *Shri-Shri Ujjalanilamanih* (IV. 28).

This was the new love that manifested in the medieval world as the fifth *purushartha*. In this medieval mental context, *prema* and *kama* were construed as the opposite poles. Thus *prema*, categorically opposed as it was to *kama*, was in the process redefined by its opposite. This represented a novel development. Ancient Sanskrit literature was of course familiar with the emotion called *prema* (love), but the word was not used in the medieval Bengali sense. Of the works of antiquity, it is in the *Meghaduta* of Kalidasa that the pangs of love find ample expression. The word love is, however, used interchangeably with passion by Kalidasa. In his poem, the pangs of separation from the beloved occur equally in *kama* (passion) and in *prema* or love (verses 2, 5, 8, 10, 118, 119).

The new love, which was elevated above all other *purusharthas* in the Bengali vernacular tradition, introduced *viraha* as the dominant mood for the first time. Sanskrit poetics had hitherto dictated that *viraha* (separation) must be followed by *samprayoga* (union), thereby ruling out the predominance of the *viraha* mood in drama and poetry (Goswami XV.95-96). The force of this ancient convention is evident in Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda* (twelfth century) and in the medieval *Brahmavaivartapurana* (composed in Bengal between the ninth and fifteenth centuries). In neither of these texts is *prema* split off as yet from *kama*, although Radha, the quintessential medieval embodiment of love and its sorrow, makes her first appearance in these two late Sanskrit texts. *Viraha*, which is her essence, is overlaid here by a heavily sensuous eroticism in the Sanskrit style.

It is not that *prema* as a pure emotional feeling is altogether unknown at this stage. In a famous Sanskrit verse, Krishna declares his love for Radha in these words:

> *Tvam-asi mama bhūṣaṇaṁ, tvam-asi mama jivanaṁ, tvam-asi mama bhava-jaladhi-ratnam. Smara-garala-khaṇḍanam, mama shirasi, maṇḍanaṁ, dehi pada-pallavam-udāram*
>
> You are my adornment and my life. You are my precious gem in this ocean of existence. You purify all the poison in me. You are the crown on my head. Let me worship your feet. (Jayadeva)

Despite such protestations of heart felt love, a heavy eroticism prevails in the *Gitagovinda* of Jayadeva and in accordance with Sanskrit poetics it ends in the physical union between Radha and Krishna. In the *Brahmavaivartapurana*, the same classical model of intermediary *viraha* and concluding *samprayoga* prevails. Midway, Krishna pronounces: "Radha has to suffer on account of her karma. She will have to go through a hundred years' separation (*viraha*) from me." Nevertheless, the text is dipped in eroticism, and true to the style, the two lovers unite in Golok, the Vaishnava heaven. Radha's *viraha* is but incidental to the story, what prevails is the sexual intercourse at the end (*Brahmavaivartapurana* 581, 640).

Bengali poetry broke through this classical model and created a new Radha, suffering a perpetual separation from her lover. She is the symbol of the devotee, pining for the Lord through aeons of time. Thus medieval Bengali literature gave *viraha* full play and thereby won its freedom from the limiting convention of the Sanskrit poetic model. The consequences were far-reaching in the sphere of mentality and in the history of emotions. It transformed Radha and liberated *viraha*,

an unbound pathos that roamed over an entire new poetic range was revealed in the *padavalis* of Chandidas and other poets inspired by a new spiritual meaning. The *viraha* which they conceived differed from the erotic pangs of antiquity. It sublimated earthly love and was moving in its expression of spiritual pain.

The phenomenon was not limited to the Bengali vernacular tradition alone. In the Tamil poetry of the Alvars, *viraha* was already an essential element of *bhakti*. The oral tradition in the Srirangam temple of Tamil country still narrates the story of Andal who spent her entire life suffering the pangs of separation from Krishna. The same theme recurs in the tale of Mirabai of Rajasthan who similarly merged into the image of her true husband Krishna and ended her earthly existence in the manner of Andal of yore.

This self-surrender, this suffering of separation from the celestial beloved was essential to the transition from *kama* to *prema*. In this transition, beginning inchoately in pre-Muslim South India and more generally impelled and clearly articulated by the subsequent spread of the Sufi notion of *ishq*, lay the seeds of a new age. Seen from the angle of inner history, this age articulated a mentality that proclaimed *prema* or *ishq* as the supreme purpose of life, enshrined above dharma, *artha*, *kama* or moksha.

Medieval love was anchored in *viraha*; it began and ended in it. Its reward was sublimation, achieved through suffering. Following its own inner logic, this love conceived itself in the matrix of an illicit, *parakiya* (extra-marital) relationship, for that is the type of relationship which begins in suffering and ends in it. As Rupa Goswami put it: "Driven by passion (*ragena*) to transgress the law (*dharma*), the surrogate husband (*upapati*) becomes the object of the love (*prema*) of a married woman (*parakiya abala*)" (I.13). There can be no final rift in the life-long marital relationship. In marked contrast, separation and the grief it entails loom large in the extra-marital affair. For that is an affair of the heart outside the framework of the household. Since the household stands for *samsara*, this is technically an unworldly relationship. The new *viraha-centred* extra-marital *prema* contained the explosive possibility of an overturning of the existing dharmic and marital order which governed the *samsara* (the world). That, however, was quickly brought under control, its anarchic edge blunted by applying a spiritual gloss on *parakiya prema* as valid only in the divine and not the terrestrial sphere. "The belittlement spoken of in this context," pronounced Rupa Goswami, "applies to the mortal hero alone, not to Krishna who became an avatar in order to taste the essence of sentiments" (I.15). *Viraha* was transformed from the physical pain of unsatisfied erotic desire into a spiritual sublimation of one's earthly longings. In this suitably modified and spiritualised form, extra-marital love established its formal supremacy in orthodox Gaudiya (Bengal) Vaishnavism. Some pundits of Vrindavan who argued in favour of *svakiya* (love with one's own wife) were defeated in debate by the pundits of Gauda, and the victory deeds which the Bengali scholars obtained formally acknowledged this supremacy. The provincial Mughal government under Nawab Murshid Quli Khan gave strong support in these debates to the Bengali scholars advocating *parakiya*.[10]

Radha's *parakiya* connection with Krishna and her hundred-year *viraha* is

the staple theme of vernacular Bengali literature in the medieval age. The affair is treated at length in the early poetical work, *Shrikrishnakirtan,* of Bodu Chandidas. This text, assigned to the second half of the fourteenth century, depicts Radha as the aunt-in-law of the crafty, intrepid cowherd Kanha, who lays her in the forest and then leaves her high and dry to depart for Mathura. Her love and pining for the fickle lover is perhaps the first inchoate manifestation of the process of emergence of the nascent *prema* of the early middle age. The new sentiment arises out of the transformation of her hot passion for the virile lad who plays the flute on the banks of the Jamuna:

> Who plays that flute in the pastures of
> Gokul?
> Who plays that flute on the banks of
> the Kalini?
> My body is in turmoil, so is my mind,
> The flute strains have upset my
> cooking.
> I wonder who is the player of this
> flute?
> I shall be a slave unto him.

Her erotic love, described in naive detail at the beginning of the story, is transformed into an extra-sensory feeling at the end, and her final declaration, as Krishna departs forever, embodies the transition from base passion to *bhakti* (spiritual devotion):

> You are the final resort of my life
> Now, Kanha, I feel in me a devotion
> for you. (Amitrasudan Bhattacharya
> 382, 450)

A spiritual love rooted in perpetual *viraha* inspired the early medieval vernacular poetry and provided the basis of the new ideology, which shaped the figure of Chaitanya and delineated the contours of the Chaitanya era. The lyrics of Chandidas and a hundred other Vaishnava poets in Bengali embodied this pure, distilled love. This was the fifth and final aim of man.

The new concept of love was not confined to Vaishnava literature. It strongly influenced the Islamic Bengali literary tradition, too. Vaishnava *bhakti* and Sufi *ishq* melted and merged to take over Islam in the frontier province of Bengal. The Sufi Shaikhs introduced the concepts of *nafs* and *ishq* in Bengal. At the same time the Vaishnava minstrels sang the virtues of *viraha* and *prema*. The early works composed by Bengali Muslim poets used both sets of concepts.

Shah Muhammad Sagir wrote a narrative in Bengali verse in the fifteenth century called *Yusuf Zulaikha*. This was the first specimen of Muslim writing in Bengali. The Bengali poet adapted it from the Persian version of an old Biblical story, re-moulding the story according to the spirit of his age and conceiving the love between the protagonists in terms of *prema* and *viraha* (Ahmad 128). In a subsequent eighteenth century adaptation of the same story by Shah Garibullah, Zulaikha felt the "fire of love" or *ishq* for her husband's slave Yusuf. As Radha suffered a hundred year *viraha* in the Vaishnava legend, so was Zulaika made to go through a forty year burning of *aashaq aagun* (love's fire) by the Muslim poet (34, 39, 110).

Saiyid Sultan, a major seventeenth century poet, composed a work entitled *Nabibamsha*, which is regarded as the Muslim counterpart of the *Mahabharata* in the Bengali language.

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[10] For further details refer to the victory deeds or *jayapatra* dated Bikram Samvat 1125 (1718) and Bikram Samvat 1138 (1731) in Siv Ratan Mitra comp., *Types of Early Bengali Prose* 131.

The last half of this huge work is devoted to the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Here, the relationship between Allah and his last messenger or *nabi* is conceived in the Bengali terms of *prema* and *bhakti* (267, 268).

Across the communities, and not merely in Bengal but throughout the subcontinent, perceptions, emotions and sensibilities were undergoing a notable transformation in the period between 1200 and 1700 CE, which is the time-span of the distinct new notions of love that acquired ideological predominance and shaped the *zeitgeist*. Cognitive, affective, aesthetic: all three mental processes were reshaped. The change in mentality and society involved a series of related transitions: from dharma and moksha to *prema*, from karma and *jnana* to *bhakti*, from the Brahmanical hierarchy to Sufi and Vaishnava equality in the eye of God, from the rules of *varna* and ashrama to the passion of *ishq aagun* and *raga-marga*, from the glorification of the ascetic to the revalorisation of the householder, from low esteem for women and Shudras to greater honour of their intrinsic worth, from a rigidly matrimonialistic patriarchy to the elevation of women, especially the *parakiya* woman, as the highest embodiment of devotion, from the measured and conventional poetics of Sanskrit to the unrestrained emotionalism of the vernacular literatures, and from the Vedic, Buddhist and Brahmanical creeds of antiquity to the Muslim and Hindu faiths of the medieval period. All this indicated the coming of a new age. The sign of this is the well-marked change in the discourse on the *purusharthas*.

The change was not so much in the organisation of society as in thought and sensibility. The Sufi and Bhakti movements affected ideology, aesthetics and feelings more than the actual social structure. There was no systemic attempt to modify the conditions of life. What happened was a reshaping of life's aspirations at the spiritual plane.

III

This essay might have come to a natural conclusion here but for the fact that concealed in the revolution described above was another revolution, a secret revolution. It deployed the same terminology but with double *entendre* or *sandhya bhasha* (concealed meaning), in order to subvert the parent revolution from within. In Bengal, the growth of the vernacular language was accompanied by the emergence of a brand of verse which carefully concealed an inner meaning running counter to the other meaning. Originating with the *Charyapadas* of the pre-Muslim period, this type of verse came into its own in the secret manuscripts and esoteric songs of the Bauls who sprang up in the wake of the Chaitanya movement in Bengal. The Sufis and the Bhaktas offered a solution for the ills of the world in a spiritualised love beyond this world; they were not about to take any action about the ills of the world in concrete, material terms. The Bauls, on the other hand, offered a "love" which was material and substantive rather than spiritual and extra-sensory. They were not about to transform the world by social or political action, any more than the Vaishnavas or the Sufis; but they did carve out an obscure, secret corner in the world in which they lived as they wished to live, contrary to the conventional rules of society. Here they realised a *purushartha*, also called *prema*, but in another sense.

The well-known nineteenth century Bauls, Lalan Fakir and Panju Shah, were both legally included in the Muslim community, but, in fact, the Bauls denied that they belonged to any *jat* (community). This radical ideology derived its impetus from a materialist doctrine: "Spirit (*atma*) is nothing but matter (*bastu*), it is nothing supernatural (*alaukik*)" (song by Daddu Shah; no. 31 in Sakti Nath Jha, "Jay Gelo Jat Gelo Bole"). *Bastu*, matter or substance implied those generative substances of the body, the proper intermixture and ingestion of which were supposed to give immortality, or at any rate long life and good health, to both man and woman. He or she who had achieved *siddhi* (fulfilment) in this *sadhana* (striving) was *jente mara* (dead-in-life) and had achieved the *fana* or liberation in life aimed at by the Sufis (Lalan's song no. 155 in Sakti Nath Jha, *Fakir Lalan Sain, Desh, Kal O Shilpa* 49; Lalan's song no. 130 in Upendranath Bhattacharya II: 101-02). This was an absolutely secret yogic path not to be found in the Koran or Purana (Raza 177). Men and women were equally entitled to this path: *purush prakriti ithe sabe adhikari* (*Bibartta Bilas Granthah* 92). The Bauls referred to this path in coded language as *bichmella bartta* or the way of Allah-in-seed (Lalan's song no. 64/66 in mss. of Lalan songs belonging to the disciple Bholai Shah [1892], in Sakti Nath Jha, *Fakir Lalan Sain* 24) and *piriti ulta* or reverse love (Raza 36).[11]

The *sadhak* (i.e., the individual who pursues the *sadhana* or exercise) and *sadhan-sangini* (female partner in the exercise) in this secret *sadhana* aimed at *siddhi*, which consisted in skilfully separating *prema* from *kama*. *Prema* (love) involved the regular, long-term exchange of the generative fluids of the bonded pair. The lover's body would in course of time come to be at least partly constituted by the constituents of the beloved's body. Lalan was quite clear that the pursuers of this true love would have to abandon all considerations of dharma and *adharma*: *preme mojle dharmādharma chhārte hoy* (Lalan's song no. 295 in Bholai Shah mss. in Sakti Nath Jha, *Fakir Lalan Sain* 82).

This implied a series of reversals of conventional righteousness. Love must sustain itself outside the framework of marriage, and would have no legal sanction: *Svakiyār sange nahe ati prem ras, parakiyā sange jogya premer manas* (Raza 80). The union would necessarily take place during the three days of the female partner's flow, preferably in a reverse posture,[12] and there would be no conception out of the union.[13] Conception would mean *hetu* (a motive). This would be *ahaituk prem* (a motiveless love). The Baul couple defies the *shastric* injunction that a man takes a wife for the sake of a son: *putrartha kriyate bharya*. According to the *shastras*, he commits a sin by not going to her after her period is over: *Rtu-snatam – cha yo bhāryam na*

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[11] For a more detailed exposition of reverse love, see Jeanne Openshaw, *Seeking Bauls of Bengal* 200.

[12] The woman who is the very image of the goddess (devi) will adopt the posture of (sitting on) the arrow (*sharasane*) and the devotee (*sadhak*) will adopt the posture of lying below (*nimna tale*) on the ground (*dharasane*). The devi's face with be turned to the left and her eyes will be fixed steadily in a gaze to the right. The *sadhak's* face will be turned upward and his gaze will be fixed on the devi's face in rapt attention. (*Panchanan Daser Karcha* as ctd. in Upendranath Bhattacharya I: 422-23)

[13] See the contributions by Rajat Kanta Ray, Jeanne Openshaw and Sakti Nath Jha in Rajat Kanta Ray ed., *Mind, Body and Society Life and Mentality in Colonial Bengal*.

adhigachchhati, tyaktvā kalevaram sa-api pashu-yonau cha-jayate (as ctd. in *Sachitra Shivokta Ratishastra* 82). That, in the Baul view, is *hetu-kama* (motivated lust), which leads to death, as opposed to motiveless love which confers immortality (Lalan's song no. 29 in Bholai Shah mss. in Sakti Nath Jha, *Fakir Lalan Sain* 13).

The pure lover is an adept in a difficult exercise aimed at pleasing the partner and blocking one's own explosion. A coded song by Panju Shah spells out the distinction between *kama* and *prema*: "He fixes himself in his own true self and sinks into love's waves. He seizes the crocodile of desire and kills it by the five arrows. By day and night he mixes seed and menstrual blood in equal measure" (Panju Shah's song no. 271 in Upendranath Bhattacharya II: 220).[14] *Bibartta Bilas*, a secret Bengali manual much favoured by the Bauls, warned that *kama* and *prema* were as different as iron and gold, desire to please one's own sense is sex, desire to please one's beloved is love. The text here paraphrased the famous dictum of Krishnadas Kabiraj, but quite reversed the received meaning of the celebrated verse (*Bibartta Bilas Granthah* 41).[15]

What is evident in these obscure expressions is a cancellation of the orthodox Vaishnava distinction between *kama* and *prema* and a construal of the opposition between the two on an altogether different basis. The two, moreover, are inter-dependent, and not absolutely opposed. "What can I say," said Lalan in one of his songs, "about that love? Desire is the creeper of love. Without desire, love cannot proceed anywhere." Lalan therefore pondered, "How can I ever obtain *prema* without *kama*?" (Lalan's song no. 363 in Bholai Shah mss. in Sakti Nath Jha, *Fakir Lalan Sain* 92). What he refers to in coded language here is a difficult yogic exercise involving the retention of seed and its controlled intermixture with the partner's substance for intake and sustenance. He compared the technique to the process by which the bee drinks honey from a flower through its sting (Lalan's song no. 20 in Bholai Shah mss. in Sakti Nath Jha, *Fakir Lalan Sain* 9). In guarded terms he went on to say, "Those who practise the pure love, where do they stow the eros of desire? The eros of desire must awake first, in a flow of fluid, and there must be stability in that flow, and the love-giving man will play in that stream" (Lalan's song no 56 in Bholai Shah mss. in Sakti Nath Jha, *Fakir Lalan Sain* 22). *Rasa* (fluid) here is a coded word referring to the life-creating substance, the preservation of which is tantamount to the indefinite prolongation of life. In *kama*, the generative fluids move *down*; in *prema*, on the contrary, they are said to move *up*. But first the seed should be split in a controlled manner to mix with menstrual blood and the united substance must then be pulled back by upward suction through the generative organ by means of the *vajroli mudra*. In addition to this, the *sadhana* also involves ingestion of the body wastes, not merely one's own but those of the beloved. It is particularly among poor villagers that this secret practice prevailed.

When and how did this *sadhana* originate? Yoga and Tantra, designed in late antiquity, had provided that both the

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[14] The five arrows are *madan* (love play), *madan* (intercourse), *shoshan* (suction), *stambhan* (flow arrest) and *mohan* (bliss).

[15] For clarifications, see Ray edited, *Mind Body and Society* 19-20.

renouncer and the householder might practise the *vajroli mudra*[16] and thereby subjugate the *siddhis*. The *sadhana* had no connection with *bhakti* then and was classified by Madhava in *Sarva-Darsana-Samgraha* as the Raseshvara-darshana (Philosophy of Mercury). References to the *sadhana* occur in the vernacular *Charyapadas* (c. 900-1100 CE) and in the late Sanskrit texts, such as the *Hathayogapradipika*, the *Shiva-Samhita* and the *Pavanavijayasvarodya*, which explain the *vajroli mudra* more clearly than the coded vernacular texts.[17]

The Yogis and Tantriks practised breath control and *coitus reservatus*; the aim was *siddhi*, not *prema*. The *beshara* (heterodox) Muslim fakirs who pursued the same *sadhana* did so within the framework of a doctrine of love which they had imbibed from the Sufis. The association of the *sadhana* with *bhakti* and *prema* might therefore have occurred through the influence of *tasawwuf* in the medieval period. Certainly, Yoga and Tantra were not, in origin, devotional cults. The key development was the linking of the Yogic and Tantric *sadhana* to the heterodox Sahajiya Vaishnava and Baul doctrine of love and its lodgement in obscure, heterodox cults in the lower ranks of rural society. This happened soon after, and as a result of the Chaitanya revolution in Bengali in the course of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The late medieval cult of love practised by the Bauls, both Muslim and Hindu, united the *mukti* or *siddhi* (materialistic liberation) of antiquity with the emotional devotionalism of high medieval love. This was the final transformation of *purusharthas* in India's pre-modern civilisation. The secret body-centred cosmos created by the lowly *sadhaks* in their obscure villages represented an ideology more radical than the spiritual ideology of Bhakti. The Chaitanya movement in Bengal had, of course, a strongly protestant element in its ideology of love. A spiritual revolt against the Brahmanical order, it represented an indirect challenge to the *varnashramadharma* of antiquity. But concealed within this soft, spiritual revolt, embedded at its bottom, was a harder ideological and social challenge, that of the advocates of substantive love as against the upholders of extra-sensory love. The process of redefining the fifth aim of man fostered a revolution within a revolution.

IV

The medieval ideological revolutions did not pass off without leaving their imprint on the modern era. As late as the twentieth century, there lived in rural Bengal an unknown Baul who realised in this existence a model of love which owed nothing to modernity, but which was nevertheless radical in its reversals of conventions. Raj Khyapa was a wandering Guru who left an autobiography in verse.[18] In his wanderings, this *sadhak* found a worthy *sadhan-sangini* in the wife of a disciple in an obscure village in Nadia. The

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[16] For a detailed explanation, see B. N. Banerjee, *Practical Yoga Philosophy or Siva Samhita* 46, 54, 203.

[17] For further details, see Haraprasad Shastri ed., *Hajar Bachharer Purana Bangla Bhashav Bauddha Gan o Doha* (50; song no. 4); *Hathayoga Pradipika* (III.26-27); *Shiva-Samhita* (IV.81-82); and *Pavana-Vijaya-Svarodaya* (71; nos. 238-39).

[18] For further reference, see Jeanne Openshaw, "Raj Krishna: Perspectives on the World of a Little-known Bengali 'Guru'" 109; and her *Seeking Bauls of Bengal* 119-20.

couple left the village suddenly, to avoid the wrath of the orthodox local *zamindar*. She left behind a husband and a child, for the sake of the man she loved. Raj and his beloved, Rajeshwar, wandered from village to village, until they set up an ashram in yet another obscure corner in Birbhum district. The couple had no child, which bespoke of the success of their *sadhana*. Raj found fulfilment in the love of Rajeshwar, who was his "mistress" in name (Raj + Ishwar = Rajeshwar, i.e., Lord of Raj) and, in fact, she brought him the solace he needed for the misfortune which, long years ago, had driven him from home. Raj hailed from a village in Sylhet and had left it upon losing his small son. Like prince Siddhartha, this poor villager, too, left home in search of something. What the *khyapa* (mad one) found was a love quite different from the liberation which the Buddha (Enlightened one) attained in life.

The lesson of this history is that, as the aims of existence evolve, so does existence itself. The changing *purusharthas* reflect the changes in Indian civilisation over time. The emergence of dharma, *artha, kama* and moksha coincided with the triumph of the Brahmanical order. The rise of *prema*, following upon the imported Sufi notion of *ishq*, coincided with a medieval ideological challenge to this order which was at first confined to the sphere of the spirit. But within this spiritualised *prema* there was a concealed substantive *prema* which stood this protest on its head and thereby created a radically different way of life for those late medieval madmen who were willing to pay the price for living outside the *varnashramadharma*.

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Cartographies of the Imagination, Legacies of Colonialism: The Discourse of Religion and the Mapping of Indic Traditions

Richard King

> Modern colonialism won its great victories not so much through military and technological prowess as through its abilities to create secular hierarchies incompatible with the traditional order.
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> – Ashis Nandy, *The Intimate Enemy*

Introduction

SIGNS AT THE END of the twentieth century suggest that the era of European (though not necessarily western) domination of the globe has come to an end. We are living through a period of history that Cornel West has called "the passing of the Age of Europe." Indeed for macro-historians such as Andre Gunder Frank, the dominance of Europe in recent centuries is more accurately seen as a small phase within a larger historical trend of an Asian-centred world.[1] This is important, since as the age of overt imperialism fades, so does the illusion that European worldviews and epistemologies constitute a wholly natural way of understanding the world and our human experience of it. The Enlightenment master narrative of European ideas and values as the apex of "civilisation" – an attitude which under-girded European imperialism – is now increasingly being seen for what it is – namely one of a number of competing cultural constructions of reality. In other words, in a cross-cultural and post-colonial context the "provinciality" of European ways of understanding the world, is increasingly being highlighted with reference to the historical specificity

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[1] Frank argues that it is only Eurocentrism that causes us to see "Europe" as the focal point of world history. Directly challenging the received historiographical accounts provided by Marx, Weber, Polanyi, Braudel and Wallerstein, Frank argues that the rise of the West from 1400 onwards coincided with a period of partial decline in Asia, and is tied, amongst other things, to the economic benefits gained by European expansionism. At the end of the twenty-first century, he suggests we are seeing the re-emergence of Asia and a return to the Asia-centred history that preceded more recent history. For further discussion of the Eurocentric prejudices contained in mainstream accounts of world history (or even within the very nature of "History" itself), see J. M. Blaut, *Eight Eurocentric Historians*; and Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe*.

of their origins and provenance. This presents a challenge to those of us who wish to explore the rich history of South Asian thought, traditions and culture. How does one study and engage with such traditions when their very representation and configuration have been so radically altered by the encounter with European colonialism and the processes of modernity?

The Map of Religion

One thing is clear from this context. The colonial domination of the West over "the rest" in recent centuries has caused many Western categories, ideas and paradigms to appear more universal and normative than they might otherwise have seemed. "Religion" is one such category and could be described as a key feature in the imaginative cartography of western modernity. The concept serves as a cognitive map for surveying, classifying and interpreting diverse cultural and historical terrains and allows a distinction to be drawn between "secular" and "religious" spheres of human life.

However, as Jonathan Z. Smith reminds us, "map is not territory." A key factor in the *claimed* universality of certain western concepts and the resultant confusion between map and territory I will suggest is the recent history of European imperialism and the effect that this has had upon the cultures of the colonised. Maps are powerful things. In the context of the 1947 British partition of India, "we can see how the stroke of a pen across a map could determine the lives and deaths of millions of people" (Harley). What effects do our cognitive maps of cultures have upon human lives and identities?

As a number of scholars have noted, both the *modern* concept of religion as a system of beliefs and practices and the discipline of Religious Studies is a product of the Enlightenment, though, of course, the term has roots and rival etymologies going back to Cicero and Lactantius (King, *Orientalism and Religion*, ch. 2). Recently, there have been a number of works that have called into question the central unifying concept of the discipline of the history of religions – the category of religion itself. These include works by Jonathan Z. Smith, Talal Asad (*Genealogies of Religion*), Russell McCutcheon (*Manufacturing Religion*), Tim Fitzgerald, and my own contribution to this debate (*Orientalism and Religion*).[2] Perhaps the first person to draw attention to problems with the category in a systematic fashion was the scholar Wilfred Cantwell Smith in his 1962 book, *The Meaning and End of Religion*.[3] Smith argues that "the term 'religion' is confusing, unnecessary and distorting.... Progress in understanding – even at the academic level – of the traditions of other people throughout history and throughout the world, are both seriously blocked by our attempt to conceptualize what is involved in each case in terms of (a) religion" (50).

Despite this, Smith remained an eager advocate of "inter-faith dialogue" throughout his career. He proposed replacing the category of "religion" with "cumulative tradition," on the one hand,

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[2] In *Orientalism and Religion* I argued that the category of "religion" is the product of a culturally specific discursive history characterised by the imprints that Christian theology, the Enlightenment and secular modernity have left upon it. As such its continued unreflective use cross-culturally, whilst opening up interesting debates and interactions over the past few centuries (and creating something called "inter-faith dialogue" and "the world religions") has also closed down avenues of exploration and other potential cultural and intellectual interactions.

and "personal faith," on the other. For Smith what links these two dimensions is "the living person" (*The Meaning and End of Religion* 156). Faith is a kind of "inner religious experience" (156) or "quality" (171). "To be religious is an ultimately personal act" (177). In emphasising this, Smith underplays the role of community-identity and perpetuates the post-Enlightenment privatisation of the religious as an inner state or feeling, a characterisation established by figures such as Schleiermacher, William James and Rudolph Otto.[4] This characterisation feeds into one important strand of inter-religious dialogue and the comparative study of religion in the twentieth century – namely the emphasis placed upon religious experience as the locus of religiosity and therefore also the ground for the meeting of different traditions in the search for a common mystical core to the various world religions.[5]

However, the emphasis upon experience and the concept of "faith" are also culturally loaded terms. Critiques of the modernist "rhetoric of experience" (Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience") have been put forward by Denys Turner, Grace Jantzen, Robert Sharf ("Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience"), and myself (*Orientalism and Religion*) on a variety of grounds, but especially for the way in which medieval Christian mystics and ancient South Asian traditions have been translated by the psychologising prism of western modernity into what sociologist Paul Heelas has called "Self-spiritualities."

The privatisation of modern notions of mysticism, inspired by the seminal work of William James, similarly ignores the shifting meanings and constructions of "the mystical" throughout its largely Christian history. In my view, scholars interested in exploring what has been called "Asian mysticism" need to pay far more attention to the ways in which the construction of a number of stereotypical images of the East – D. T. Suzuki's "Zen Buddhism," Vivekananda's or even Shankara's Advaita Vedanta, Patanjali's "Yoga," Lao Tse's *Dao De Jing* – have been pressed into service in the last century as

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[3] Smith outlines the various shifts in the usage of the category of "religio" in the West from pre-Christian Rome to the present day. For a discussion of the significance of this shift, see chapter 2 of King, *Orientalism and Religion*. Smith notes that in medieval Europe, the term was generally used by the Catholic tradition in the sense of "the religious life," that is, the life of monastic vows. The various *religiones* denoted the various monastic orders. However, it is with the Protestant Reformation that we find "religion" being used to denote faith or piety. This led the way for the seventeenth and eighteenth century uses of the term "religion" to denote a system of beliefs and the emphasis that theologians like Friedrich Schleiermacher and Rudolf Otto made upon the religious as essentially about experience or a "creaturely feeling." In the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries we find the birth of a new goal – that of discerning the essence of "Religion" and the religions. As Smith noted, "This is to carry the process of reification to its logical extreme: endowing the concepts that an earlier generation has constructed ... with a final and inherent validity, a cosmic legitimacy" (*The Meaning and End of Religion* 47-48). Smith's overview of the history of the term in the West constitutes a single chapter of his work (chapter 2). For more detailed analyses, see Michel Despland, *La Religion en Occident*; Ernst Feil, *Religio* and *Religio II*. See also, Michel Despland and Gérard Vallee, eds., *Religion in History*; and Daniel Dubuisson, *The Western Construction of Religion*.

[4] For Cantwell Smith's response to this and other criticism, see Smith, "Retrospective Thoughts on *The Meaning and End of Religion*," especially pages 14-15, 17-18.

[5] According to Steven Wasserstrom, "The dominance of mysticism in the History of Religions, more generally, remains regnant (not only genealogically) throughout the study of religion" (240).

token representatives of something called "the global phenomenon of mysticism." Whether colonised and homogenised by the perennialists or essentialised and segregated by the constructivists, such stereotypes of "the Mystic East" have been used to make a variety of competing claims about the "mystical," spiritual or other-worldly nature of Asian cultures. Contemporary debates within the field have also served to locate certain aspects of Asian and Western cultures within a modernist and psychologised framework that misreads the phenomenon captured by the term "mysticism" on a number of levels.[6] The ongoing significance of the modern "psychological turn" can be seen not only in the emphasis that is placed upon "experience" as the locus of religiosity within the study of religions (and *especially* the study of mysticism) but also in the contemporary shift in contemporary Western societies away from the term "religion" and towards a privatised and consumer-oriented notion of "spirituality" (Carrette and King).

There are similar problems with an emphasis upon notions of "faith" and the "world faiths." Faith may be an important determinant of identity within the Christian "cumulative tradition," but even here it is less significant historically than the Protestant Reformation might suggest. In medieval Europe most people were "Christians" not through an explicit self-willed "faith" but through their allegiance to the traditions and practices of their kin. For scholars such as Gabriel Le Bras it is not even clear that we can talk of Christianity as the religion of pre-Revolutionary France except in the limited sense of being so deemed by the monarchial constitution. Similarly, the notion of "faith" itself has gone through a number of shifts in meaning, most notably the shift from "being faithful to" to "having faith in" something. As Rustom Barucha has argued, the pluralities and ambivalences captured by the English term "faith" have yet to be properly theorised in either a South Asian or social scientific context. More importantly for my argument here, faith in the modern sense of "religious belief" has not been a central feature of identity construction in most of the Asian traditions with which Christianity has come into contact (Lopez).

As a number of scholars have noted (Asad, *Genealogies of Religion*; Viswanathan; Daniel Dubuisson; Peterson and Walhof), the construction of "religion" in terms of private belief is a peculiar feature of western modernity. The location of "the religious" within

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[6] For a critique of the tendency to conceive of "Buddhism" as peculiarly concerned with the cultivation of "mystical experiences" and therefore as an archetypally "mystical" religion, see Robert Sharf, "Buddhist Modernism and the Rhetoric of Meditative Experience," and King, "Mysticism and the Legacy of William James." Sharf questions "the tendency to approach the compendious Buddhist marga treatises (texts delineating the stages on the Buddhist path) as if they presented a phenomenological analysis of the experiences of seasoned meditators ..." (232). Rather, he argues, traditional references to meditation or *bhavana* (mental development) should be seen not in terms of the cultivation of extraordinary and private states of consciousness, but as primarily liturgical and propadeutical in orientation. Such practice "consisted largely of the recitation of Pali texts pertaining to meditation ... chanting verses enumerating the qualities of the Buddha, reciting formulaic lists of the thirty-two parts of the body, and so on" (242). Moreover, in the modern period the "rhetoric of experience" functions as an empty category in which a variety of Buddhist ideological positions can be placed and Buddhism "as a spiritual phenomenon can be assigned a "trans-cultural, trans-historical reality." Such privatisation of Buddhism allows for the construction of an idealised and ahistorical "world religion" amenable to both perennialist and secular interpretations and successfully divorces the traditional Buddhist meditative practices from the ethical, doctrinal, liturgical and socio-political context in which they occurred.

the private sphere of belief however, often highlighted as a key consequence of the European Enlightenment, has not gone uncontested.[7] Indeed, since the nineteenth century, and particularly after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the 1990s,[8] the category of "religion" has provided the *main site for the framing and articulation of alternatives to Euro-American models of modernity*. Such movements and modes of cultural resistance are translated, as Derrida has recently suggested, into a *Latinised* frame of reference when they are represented in mainstream western culture, or as Derrida himself puts it: "the world today speaks Latin (most often via Anglo-American) when it authorizes itself in the *name* of *religion*" (64). The process whereby expressions of cultural difference become translated as "religion" in the western imagination is thus labelled by Derrida, *mondialatinisation*, in "Anglo-American" – "*globalatinisation*" (45-46, 64, 66-67, 42, 50-52, 72).

The role of "the religious" as a repository in the western and westernised imagination for movements with a strong element of resistance to "secular" models of modernity has been somewhat masked from view by the tendency in western liberal circles to relegate all that is placed in the category of "the religious" to the private sphere and to interpret any irruption of "the religious" into the public space as evidence of "religious fundamentalism." The attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001, however, has effectively contributed, in stark and horrific fashion, to an unravelling of this model of "the religious" in the public consciousness of the western world. That this was already occurring can be seen from the work of José Casanova, in his recent suggestion that in the late twentieth century we have been witnessing a steady "de-privatization" of religion.

"Religion" and the Social Imaginary

The notion that the concept of religion is an "imagined category" has been explored by the Chicago historian of religion Jonathan Z. Smith. Smith makes the following statement at the beginning of his 1982 work, *Imagining Religion*:

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[7] As Talal Asad has argued in *Genealogies of Religion*, the modern western tendency to conceive of religion in terms of belief – located in the private state of mind of a believer – has led westerners to think of religion as something that is essentially private and therefore wholly separate from the public realm of politics. Indeed for Asad all attempts to find a universal definition or "essence" of religion are to be avoided because they imply that religion is somehow able to operate in isolation from other spheres of human cultural activity such as politics, law and science (28). The privatisation of the religious, characterised by the emphasis upon "the world faiths" simultaneously insulates such traditions from wider public criticism but it also ghetto-ises them by marginalising their significance for debates in the public domain. Moreover, the sheer diversity of human cultures means that the search for universal definitions of terms like "religion" is fruitless. In its place, Asad advocates an approach to the study of cultures which focuses upon embodied practices and the specific power-relations in which they operate.

[8] Indeed, since the collapse of the Soviet Union, it has become increasingly difficult to express cultural and political alternatives to western liberal Capitalism without such resistance being framed in terms of the post-Enlightenment category of "the religious." In the vacuum caused by the collapse of the communist bloc, Marxism itself appears to be going through a period of transition and reconfiguration "after the Age of Europe." In this new context it is no surprise to find that it is the "culturalist" Marxists such as Althusser and particularly Gramsci, who are proving of most interest to postcolonial and "third world" writers if only because these strands of Marxist thought are better able to accommodate a dialectical space for indigenous intentionalities that are otherwise erased by universalist notions of "class" and a narrow emphasis upon economic determinism.

> If we have understood the archaeological and textual record correctly, man has had his entire history in which to imagine deities and modes of interaction with them. But man, more precisely western man, has had only the last few centuries in which to imagine religion. It is this act of second order, reflective imagination which must be the central preoccupation of any student of religion.... *Religion is solely the creation of the scholar's study*. It is created for the scholar's analytic purposes by his imaginative acts of comparison and generalization. *Religion has no independent existence apart from the academy*. For this reason, the student of religion ... must be relentlessly self-conscious. Indeed, this self-consciousness constitutes his primary expertise, his foremost object of study. (xi; italics mine)

I must admit to being uncomfortable with one reading of Smith's suggestion – which is that religion is a category located specifically in the imaginative mind of the scholar. "Religion" is a *socially* constructed category. It is a constitutive element of the *social*, political and economic world in which we live. To imply that the notion of "religion" exists only in the mind of an individual is to fall into the Cartesian trap of dividing the world into empirically real facts, on the one hand, and an individually observing mind, on the other. This ignores the role that social and cultural conditioning play in the manifestation of both and the inscribing of the discourse of religion on the body itself, in the form of disciplinary practices and what Foucault calls governmentality. In other words, "religion" is not just in one's mind (if one wishes to continue to put it that way) but also exists as a structural and embodied feature of the way in which western society has divided up the world. Such categories *are* imagined or constructed – they have particular discursive histories that we can plot, but we, as individual agents, do not imagine these categories in isolation from the wider social, political and linguistic structures through which we make sense of reality.

"Religion" then exists not only in the scholar's imagination but also in the collective imagination of the wider community. Its use is never "purely academic" and has been bound up, as Peterson and Walhof have recently argued, with the construction "of national identities and the exercise of colonial power" (1). Contemporary scholars of religion do not dream up this category, they inherit it and build upon it. Rather, like the Yogachara Buddhist philosopher, I want to stress that imagined constructions (what the *Madhyanta Vibhaga* calls *abhuta-parikalpa* – the imagination of the unreal), do in fact *exist* in the sense that they produce effects and structure our perception of the world. Now to be fair to Professor Smith, I do not think that he would necessarily wish to deny the point that I am making. Indeed, on the very next page he appeals to the role played by Judaism in "our collective invention of western civilization"(xii). Nevertheless, to distil the category down to the level of individual agency is precisely to ignore its power. It is part of our social imaginary and structures our social reality.

One of the interesting issues that arise here is not so much whether or not western notions of religion are accurate but rather a matter of documenting the historical process whereby such notions became self-evident even to those for whom they were an innovation. The classification of certain cultural phenomena as "religious" and its

separation from a sphere known as the "secular" may well seem obvious to some, but it was not "common sense" at all to non-Europeans before the advent of colonialism.

However, attention to colonialism and that complex series of processes labelled "globalisation" causes us to realise that although a "map is not territory," the conceptual force (literally, *force*) of terms such as "religion" has meant that they have functioned not simply as descriptive taxonomies of cultural terrain, they have also led to *mondialatinisation*. In other words "religion" and the related group of concepts and orientations that cluster around it have for some time now functioned as "prescriptive" models or blueprints that have transformed the terrain itself.[9] *Maps may not be territory, but through colonialism, European cognitive maps have reconfigured the very territory that they are purported to be a representation of.* This is no more apparent than in the tendency in both colonial narratives and indigenous South Asian responses, to locate "authentic religiosity" within the sacred texts of a tradition and in the interpretation of prescriptive statements within those texts as descriptive accounts of historical truth. This led to a widespread criticism of contemporary practices and a reformist spirit in, both, the coloniser and the colonised, grounded in an idealised "nostalgia for lost origins." To investigate this requires that we pay attention to the role that European colonialism has played in the reconfiguration of South Asian identities, as well as the multiple and complex agendas present and the politics of representation that they manifest. This also requires paying attention to what Talal Asad has called, "the inequality of languages" – namely the asymmetrical power relations present in the translation of concepts between "non-equivalent" languages (Asad, *Genealogies of Religion* 190; King, *Indian Philosophy* 237-38).

The "Discourse of Religion" in the Study of South Asia

What have been the consequences of taking the European cartographic imagination too seriously – of using the map of "religion" to explain and classify the intellectual and cultural traditions of Asia?

Firstly, some of the key cultural fault-lines and traditional modes of identity-construction will be overlooked if only because they will be "written over" by an emphasis upon distinguishing features of the terrain that have been significant in a western context. This is no more obvious than in the exclusion of Asian intellectual thought from the history of philosophy. In the case of Indian traditions, this has usually been on the grounds that Indian philosophy is deemed too "religious" or "tradition-bound" to be philosophy in the purest (read modern/western/secular) sense. Similarly, the contribution of Islamic thinkers to the history of philosophy is often relegated to the role of medieval postal workers, safely delivering classical Greek philosophy to the medieval Europeans. And as long as we continue to see Islam as a "religion" in the modern post-Enlightenment sense of a "faith," we will fail to understand the significance of contemporary trends such

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[9] Frits Staal notes, for instance, that "The inapplicability of Western notions of religion to the traditions of Asia has not only led to piecemeal errors of labelling, identification and classification, to conceptual confusion and to some name-calling. It is also responsible for something more extraordinary: the creation of so-called religions" (393).

as "Islamic science," "Islamic economics" and crucially in today's world, Islamic politics (Esposito 199-202). These simply cannot be adequately rendered in terms of the highly policed boundary between the secular and the religious that dominates many western post-Enlightenment descriptions of reality. The sense in which Islam, for instance, represents diverse communitarian, civilisational and political dimensions is lost if we focus upon it narrowly as a personal "faith."

The real challenge then is to question the terms of the debate – that is a map which draws a rigid boundary between the secular and the religious dimensions of human existence and the effect that this has had upon the classification and interpretation of non-western intellectual traditions. It is this separation which maintains the marginality of non-western perspectives and worldviews within the terms set by modern western liberalism. In doing so their importance as the major site for the articulation of difference and resistance to *globalatinisation* becomes severely curtailed. The distillation of "the religious" dimension of culture from other spheres of human activity causes such traditions to be cognitively and structurally segregated from the realms of politics, economics, science and philosophy. This privileges modern western ideologies and forms of life (such as economic neo-liberalism, triumphalist secularism, scientific rationalism and materialism) and insulates them from an open-ended engagement with the varieties of human attempts to articulate the nature of reality.

Moreover, the projection of anachronistic and highly reified notions of "Hinduism" and "Buddhism" onto South Asian history has also caused scholars to miss important points of connection and contestation between traditions. Over-reliance upon the "map of religion" has led scholars to portray "Hindu" and "Buddhist" traditions as if they were hermetically sealed socio-religious movements – communities with fixed rather than porous and sometimes fluid boundaries. This has been reinforced by the tendency for scholars to specialise in one or the other set of traditions but rarely in both. As a consequence the complex interplay between "Hindu" and "Buddhist" in South Asia is often missed or at least under-emphasised.

Despite the reconfiguration of indigenous subjectivities and communities during the colonial period and the relatively recent rise of the discourse of "Hindutva" and exclusivist Hindu movements with firmly demarcated boundaries, the dynamic and fluid nature of South Asian traditions remains to this day, with Hindus, Buddhist, Jains and Muslims interacting on a number of different levels. Such interactions are, of course, complex and shift according to local context and history but they are rarely well captured by the search for what might be called "the religious dimension." As Talal Asad has argued, the search for an essence of religion encourages us to abstract "the religious" from a wider cultural and political dynamic (*Genealogies of Religion*). *It points us away from culture and power rather than towards an appreciation of their mutual imbrication* (King, *Orientalism and Religion*). This has also helped to foster the notion that the "religions," particularly of the Indic traditions, are apolitical and "otherworldly" in orientation. From this perspective such traditions and the scholarly specialist in them would seem to have little to offer to the broader

discussion of politics, economics and society. As Ninian Smart once put it, in the context of university debates, "having been dethroned as the *Queen of Sciences*, the study of religion has now become the *Knave of Arts*" (as ctd. in Sharpe 2).

The work of scholars such as Richard Gombrich, Steven Collins and Joanna Jurewicz increasingly demonstrate that we miss key features and allusions within early Buddhist thought and imagery if we ignore the social and ideological struggles being played out in the texts, particularly in terms of relations with the mainstream Vedic and Brahmanical traditions of the time. Similarly, one cannot understand the specific form that early Advaita Vedanta took or the orientation of Patanjali's *Yogasutras* or Ishwara Krishna's *Samkhya Karika* if we ignore their interaction with prevailing Buddhist traditions. In the study of "Indian philosophy," for instance, there has often been a tendency to elide "Indian" with "Hindu" and to represent the various *darshanas* as if they were homogeneous and self-contained systems of thought. This occludes the history of interactions between the various Brahmanical and Shramanic traditions which have clearly been crucial to the historical development of the various *darshanas*.[10] It also underplays the significance of Buddhist contributions to the history of Indian civilisation.

Elsewhere, I have attempted to highlight the ongoing replication of Orientalist presuppositions about "India" in both the Neo-Vedantic inclusivism of Vivekananda and also in contemporary discourses of Hindutva (*Orientalism and Religion*). In both cases appeal is made to a reified entity known as "Hinduism" and the history of South Asian philosophy and culture is mapped according to key features of the European cartographic imagination – most notably, the notions of "world religions," the "mystic or spiritual East" and the search for a centralising motif or theology of relevance to all Hindus. Again, as a number of scholars have noted, Dharmapala's Buddhist modernism reproduces a number of key "Protestant" features, notably the notion of recovering "pure" Buddhism from its "decadent" and superstitious village forms, in the emphasis placed upon scripture as the locus of real Buddhism, in the claim that Buddhism is compatible with modern science, and that it is significantly different from other traditions in its non-theistic and non-ritualistic emphases. Robert Sharf's work on D. T. Suzuki and the construction of "Zen nationalism" during the Meiji period is another case in point ("The Zen of Japanese Nationalism").

Again, as Peter Gottschalk has argued (in his study of village life in Arampur, Bihar), there are multiple factors involved in identity-formation that cut across a simple division of people in terms of an over-determined "Hindu" or "Muslim" identity. These factors, related to gender, economics, caste, region and familial relations, sometimes complement and sometimes cut across each other, making the question of identity and representation a complex affair. As Gottschalk himself notes,

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[10] It is clear, for instance, that the *astika-nastika* distinction so often pressed into service to reinforce the separation of "Hindu" and "Buddhist" traditions is a fluid and changeable mode of classification with shades of meaning and application that shift according to context. The Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna, in fact, refers to the Vaisheshika school as one of several *nastikas* (non-affirmers) in his work the *Ratnavali* (I.60-61).

"Western scholars of the Subcontinent rely too heavily on *Hindu* and *Muslim* as descriptive adjectives and analytic categories" (3). The result has been that scholarly accounts, following the trajectory established by James Mill's *History of British India* (1817), tend to bifurcate India into two halves – *Hindu* and *Muslim*. While western colonialists and Orientalists did not create these divisions *ex nihilo* they certainly highlighted, inscribed and authorised them through the Census, education and the strategy of "divide and rule." As Peter Van der Veer has noted, it is not so much that Orientalism is the cause of communalism but rather that "orientalism and Indian nationalism both belong to the discourse of modernity. Indian nationalism, in its very anti-colonialism, shares basic discursive premises with orientalism and with the nationalism of the colonizing British" (39). The continuing presence of key Orientalist tropes in contemporary Hindu discourses of varying types is a good example of this ongoing legacy.

Conclusions: Should We Throw the Map of Religion Away?

The "discourse of religion," of course, structures and orders human knowledge as well as provides some semblance of unity for the academic field of Religious Studies. It also becomes inscribed in institutions and political structures that then become resistant to its interrogation. Given the problems highlighted, should we then, as Tim Fitzgerald has recently proposed, simply throw the map of religion away? Realising that "religion" is a mapping term, and the role played by European imperialism in universalising this category in the modern world, allows us to see both the problems with the term and its ongoing *significance*. To ask how many religions there are in the world is to confuse map with territory. Similarly, to ask whether "religion" is a *false* category is, in my view, a badly formed question since it implies that religion is more than an heuristic classificatory tool – a mental mapping term, if you like. The question of the usefulness of the map and the effects of its deployment is far more interesting. Does the map cause us to miss interesting features of South Asian history and culture simply because they are not features of the map we are using?[11] What was lost, for instance, in the decision to translate terms like *agama, sampradaya* and dharma into "religion" in South Asian contexts?

Clearly, the tendency to take western-derived terms like "religion" as representative of universal history as a whole, rather than viewing them as

[11] Note that here I am explicitly resisting the tendency of "the modern consciousness" to equate the imaginary with the false. In that sense I am trying to reconnect with a more positive or perhaps "constructive" (in both senses of the term) understanding of the imagination in a manner that is consonant with pre-Enlightenment conceptions of the imagination, that is, before the imaginary came to mean "false" or unreal in the context of secular modernity. To see what is imagined or constructed as the "false" is to fall into a trap set by post-Enlightenment thought, where the Cartesian dichotomy between mental and material existence is bolstered by an association of the "real" with "the empirical" and the material, as opposed to "the imagined" which is located in the mind of a human and therefore constitutes something that does not really exist "out there." Since the Enlightenment, imagination has often seen as the faculty which imagines that which does not exist (in the so called "real world"). However, before secularisation in medieval Europe, the faculty of the imagination was not always seen as denoting the construction of the "false" but rather tended to be represented as a faculty of perception. Similarly in a traditional South Asian context, we should note the example of the Buddhist notion of *manas* as a sensory apparatus – that which apprehends ideas. When something is imagined – particularly at the social or conventional level – this does not make it false (a point well-noted by those Indic philosophical traditions that promulgated a notion of *dvaya-satya* or two truths). We should avoid treating the socially constructed as if it is unreal. It has effects.

culturally and historically contingent conceptual tools for interpreting cultural landscapes, erases alternative indigenous terms – in the case of India, terms such as dharma, *sampradaya* and *agama* and their specific connotations. As Arvind Sharma has recently argued, the specifically Christian baggage of the term "religion" has led us to conceive of all traditions so designated in narrowly exclusionary and separative terms. To be the member of one religion then is automatically to exclude you from any other. As Sharma points out, this separatist model of religion, derived from the Christian history of the term, is presupposed in Article 18 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which advocates the right to "change one's religion" but does not consider "religious freedom" in terms of the right to advocate one religion without renouncing one's allegiance to another. Sharma suggests that re-conceiving "freedom of religion" in terms of the Indic term Dharma would open up possibilities precluded by the emphasis upon "the religious" as understood in European cultural history.

There is a need then to interrogate the historical processes whereby central features of the western cartographical imagination become normative elements in the cultural terrain way beyond their original purview. David Scott's recent work on Sri Lanka, for instance, highlights the role of the Colebrooke-Cameron reforms of the 1830s in re-structuring indigenous subjectivities and institutions, thereby creating an Anglicised middle-class elite in Sri Lanka and providing the conditions for the emergence of new reform-oriented trends such as Dharmapala's modernist Buddhism. As Scott notes,

> Concepts like "religion," "state," and "identity," are treated ahistorically insofar as they are made to refer to a set of timeless social-ideological formations as defining (or as *defining in the same way*) for say third-century inhabitants of the island as for contemporary Sinhalas. This conceptual/ideological projection of the present into the past (as a hermeneutic of the present) is possible only because these categories – religion, state, and so on – are the authoritative and normalized categories through which Universal History has been written, and through which the local histories of the colonial and postcolonial worlds have been constituted as so many variations on a common theme about the progressive making of modernity. (288-89)

What may we gain from a strategic and transgressive reversal of the translation process and the mapping of western culture and history in terms of traditional Asian categories? By inverting the colonial move, will new light be thrown on features of western culture if we examined them afresh in terms of the cartographic imagination of other cultures? If we see, for instance, the "European Enlightenment" as a loosely bound social and intellectual trend of the seventeenth/eighteenth century, originating in Northern Europe but then increasingly universalised in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries through European colonial expansion, can this not be usefully compared in macro-historical terms to say "Brahmanism" in Northern India, or "the Confucian tradition" in China, some one thousand years earlier?

Of course, only if we accept that the European Enlightenment, Indic "Brahmanism" and Confucianism are heterogeneous cultural networks and

systems, are we still able to examine the ways in which they functioned as the ideological and social backdrop for their respective societies at certain points in history. Are there not loosely defined *sampradayas* and *agamas* in the "European Enlightenment" traditions that provide the basis for our own modern academic lineages? Modern western academics belong to their own *sampradayas* and accept their own forms of authoritative testimony, as Gadamer has taught us, even if this is often effaced by the emphasis that is placed upon intellectual innovation and individual scholarship. When framed in this manner (that is without privileging the binary opposition of "tradition-modernity" and "religious-secular," that itself under-girds one particular tradition – the Enlightenment tradition of western secular modernity), "European Enlightenment" values, traditions and forms of life do not seem nearly so different *in nature* from the so-called "religious" traditions of Asia.

Should We Throw the Map of Religion Away?

Such strategic transgressions and inversions aside, I must disagree with Tim Fitzgerald's call to abandon the term "religion" altogether, a position that he too now seems to be revising.[12] Not using the term will not erase the culturally embedded associations that derive from it, nor the related constellation of concepts and orientations that cluster around it. Rather, we need to pay renewed attention to the ways in which the term "religion" is being used, most notably the way in which it demarcates cultures, traditions, practices and communities according to a number of competing (but at a deeper level, actually complicitous) ideological interests. For instance, the separation of "the religious" from the supposedly "secular" realms of politics and economics serves the interests of both secularists and those who wish to preserve "the religious" and insulate it from wider social criticism.[13] Now there are some similarities between Fitzgerald's position and mine with regard to the future of scholarship in the field of "Religious Studies" (*Orientalism and Religion*). For instance, we both advocate an exploration of the interface between religious and cultural studies. In both cases this is motivated by a concern to "re-place" religion in culture and history and also to disentangle the study of Asian traditions from the theological categories of western Christianity.

In his book *The Ideology of Religious Studies*, Fitzgerald calls for a complete revisioning of Religious Studies as a *form* of cultural studies, more specifically "the study of institutions, institutional values and the legitimation of power" (10), and the abandonment of the term "religion" altogether. I am less convinced that this is the best or even the most realistic way forward. The idea that there are

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[12] In personal communication with the author.

[13] Fundamentally, of course, the segregation of certain cultural traditions and movements as "religious" from "the secular" has functioned as one of the central platforms of secularism and its latest progeny, neo-liberalism. Through this process, Islamic, Christian, Buddhist (and so on) critiques of the social, economic and political injustices of neo-liberal policies, as promoted by groups such as the IMF and the World Bank, are portrayed as "religious," "tradition-bound" and (therefore) "dogmatic" and reactionary incursions in the otherwise secular realm of political and economic policy-making. Secularist ideology requires the concept of religion precisely as a means of maintaining its own hegemony as "non-metaphysical," which, of course, it is not.

"religions" out there in the real world is such an embedded part of our social imaginary that it seems premature to talk of abandoning the notion altogether.[14] Moreover, a rapprochement between religious and cultural studies is one thing, but the subsuming of the former under the latter is quite another. This it seem to me runs the risk of domesticating our scholarship according to the overwhelmingly Eurocentric and secularist lenses of mainstream social science. For some scholars this may seem unproblematic. Donald Wiebe ("The Failure of Nerve in the Academic Study of Religion"), for instance, has argued for some time now that "the failure of nerve" in Religious Studies has been its refusal to renounce theology and embrace its identity as a social science.

However, in calling for an abandonment of what they see as "incipient theologising" in the study of religions, scholars such as McCutcheon (*Manufacturing Religion* and *Critics Not Caretakers*) and Fitzgerald do not appear to have realised that challenging the *sui generis* nature of "religion" also creates a space for a postcolonial critique of the privileging of "the secular." Such dichotomies, as any student of the Buddhist philosopher Nagarjuna would note, are mutually dependent constructions. To resist the interrogation of the secular as well as the religious is not to abandon the map, but rather to tear it in half and use what is left. Such an approach is also in danger of promoting a reductionist sociologism,[15] that is just as problematic as the hidden theologising that scholars such as Fitzgerald, McCutcheon and Wiebe (*The Politics of Religious Studies*), see at work in the comparative study of religion.

There is a need then to be more *strategic* and sensitive to the diverse contexts in which the map of religion is being used. What worries me about Fitzgerald's suggestion is what might be lost or silenced in the process of discarding the map. Map is not territory, and similarly, baby is not bathwater! Abandoning the term (rather than its suspension and the interrogation of its translation in specific contexts) stops the debate just when it is getting interesting. Indeed as the African scholar Isabel Phiri noted at the 2000 IAHR conference in Durban – it is primarily western scholars living in the Northern hemisphere who are advocating abandoning the term "religion." In parts of contemporary Africa, she argues, the term may have an important function to perform as a tool for highlighting oppressive regimes and exclusionary practices.

Moreover, because discourses are neither homogeneous nor unidirectional, it is possible to enter the "discourse of religion" precisely as a means of contesting, reinterpreting and reading its very "common-sense-ness" against the grain. What I am advocating therefore is a dual-strategy – a "double-move" which contests and interrogates but also actively re-reads such taken-for-granted

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[14] Fitzgerald notes this himself when he states that the category of religion is now "deeply embedded in a legitimation process within western societies, in the dominant relation of those societies with non-western societies, or with ethnic minorities living within western societies" (19).

[15] Talal Asad descibes sociologism as the view, "according to which religious ideologies are said to get their real meaning from the political or economic structure, and the self-confirming methodology according to which this reductive semantic principle is evident to the authoritative anthropologist and not to the people being written about" (*Genealogies of Religion* 198-99).

concepts of the western cartographic imagination in new and imaginative ways. One might consider, for instance, applying the map of "religion" to an analysis of capitalist forms of life, secular rationalism, neo-liberal ideology, nationalism, and scientism, etc., as a means of challenging its normative effects and assumptions, or read "faith" as Rustom Bharucha does, as a complex and diverse set of phenomena that resist a binary opposition between "believer" and "non-believer." The approach I am suggesting requires an approach to categories such as "religion," "faith," "experience" and "mysticism" that is more strategic and context-sensitive than either unreflective usage, on the one hand, or simple abandonment of the map, on the other. *It involves paying attention to what I would call "the politics of macro-translation" – that is the way in which entire worldviews, traditions and forms of life have become translated through the universalising "discourse of religion."* Fundamental to this approach is the realisation, noted by Cantwell Smith in his mature reflections upon his work, that:

> When I wrote *The Meaning and End* [*of Religion*] I knew that "religion" was a Western and modern notion. I had not yet seen, but now I do see clearly, that "religion" in its modern form is a secular idea. Secularism is an ideology, and "religion" is one of its basic categories ... The secular Weltanschauung postulates, and then presupposes, a particular – indeed an odd – view of the human, and of the world: namely the secularist view. It sees the universe, and human nature, as essentially secular, and sees "the religions" as addenda that human beings have tacked on here and there in various shapes and for various interesting, powerful or fatuous reasons. ("Retrospective Thoughts on *The Meaning and End of Religion*" 16)

The category of "Religion" has of course provided a point of orientation and a putative unity for the academic field of the study/history of religions.[16] What then is the future for the comparative study of "religions" in this context? As scholars such as Hans Kippenberg and Wouter Hanegraaf have argued, the emergence of the history of religions as an academic field in Europe was bound up with processes of modernisation and diverse attempts by scholars to theorise modernity. Much of the classic scholarship within the field therefore was concerned with defending and contesting different models of what it is to be modern through a comparative analysis of "the other" (whether conceived as "the Orient," "the archaic or primitive," or "the non-western," among others). Rather than undermining this legacy, challenging *the "religionisation" of non-western cultures* highlights precisely the ongoing significance of work carried out by scholars within this field of study. The colonial translation of diverse cultures through the prism of the category of "religion" therefore remains, in a western context at least, the primary point of orientation and intervention within the comparative study of cultures. That there are considerable problems in reading universal history in terms of this deeply embedded category of the modern

[16] Indeed one way to read the history of the study of religion is to consider it as a series of competing attempts to determine the precise locus of the religious – that is to define the central focus of study. Is religion to be understood primarily in terms of myth (Müller), inner experience (Schleiermacher, James, and Otto), ritual (Robertson Smith), social fact (Durkheim) belief in the supernatural (Tylor), or sacred text ("the Protestant assumption")? What one focuses upon is as much a consequence of the method or discipline that one is working from as it is a feature of the terrain itself.

western imagination is precisely a reason for its ongoing interrogation by scholars with specialist knowledge of non-western cultures, if only because it remains the primary point of entry of so much that constitutes "cultural difference" into the western *imaginaire*.

In continuing the intellectual legacy of interrogating and challenging dominant models of modernity, there is an important and ongoing role for Religious Studies in a postcolonial context – acting as a kind of "foreign body" or "point of infiltration" within the modern secular (and post-Christian) university – a space for both the *specialised* and *comparative* study of cultures, traditions and practices, a place for the articulation of differences and the exercise of sensitive comparisons, and a site where the Eurocentric, theological and secularist presuppositions of the Academy can be thoroughly interrogated, explored and debated. What better place to start than with the category of "religion" itself?

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essay

The Third Eye and Two Ways of (Un)knowing: Gnosis, Alternative Modernities, and Postcolonial Futures

Makarand Paranjape

THE STARTING POINT FOR this paper is the premise that "alternatives to modern epistemology can hardly come from *modern* (Western) epistemology itself." This idea has been voiced quite forcefully in recent thinking by scholars such as Walter D. Mignolo, from whose book, *Local Histories/Global Designs,* the above line is taken. But even if we were to agree with such a premise, it still begs the question of where to look for these alternatives. For critics such as Mignolo, the challenge is to rehabilitate subaltern knowledge systems so as to bring about, to invoke a phrase from Foucault, "an insurrection of subjected knowledges." "Gnosis," "gnoseology" and "border thinking" have been used to describe these knowledge systems that are on the margins of, or outside, the world colonised by Western modernity. My project is to oppose the dominance of rationality (or, more recently, *ir*rationality) in modern and postmodern philosophy by invoking ideas of the supra-rational from classical as well as modern traditions of thinking, especially in India. These traditions, for lack of a better word, may be called "wisdom traditions." That they share something with Gnosticism should be obvious. I would like to focus on the work of one modern Indian thinker, Sri Aurobindo, particularly his idea of the Supermind, to suggest a slightly different way of conceiving postcolonial futures. Sri Aurobindo's thought has important implications for the discipline of consciousness studies because it posits the naturalisation of a higher consciousness than the mental. Is there, I ask, a bridge somewhere between the "secular" critics of Western modernity or colonial discourse, on the one hand, and their rather more "mystical" counterparts, on the other? If this missing link were to be discovered, it might contribute to a critical step forward in conversations on planetary futures, and actually pave the way for a new global renaissance.

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I

It is being increasingly acknowledged that colonial difference is a factor not just of economic or political power but also of contending knowledge systems. These knowledge systems, apart from being differentiated by the amount of power they enjoy, are also based on alternative epistemologies. Those who wish to critique colonialism have done so in economic and political or in philosophical, even metaphysical terms. For instance, we might argue that modernity is imperialistic as an ideology and that modernity, in turn, under-girds colonialism ideologically. This M. K. Gandhi realised only too well, which is why, when he attacked imperialism in *Hind Swaraj* he also attacked modernity. But Gandhi was one of the few to do so in so clear a fashion.

In the discourse of postcolonial studies, it has taken critics almost a hundred years after Gandhi to make similar connections. In recent years a whole host of scholars and thinkers have begun to see that overthrowing imperialism requires a certain critique of what might be called Occidental reason. For instance, a recent book on the subject by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is tellingly entitled "A Critique of Postcolonial Reason." Those who wish to make a connection between postcolonialism and postmodernism quickly leap to the conclusion that the anti-foundationalism of the latter informs the eclectic critique of power of the former. Thus Aijaz Ahmed castigates Edward Said for abandoning the teleology of history and the grand narrative of Marxian emancipation, in favour of a neo-Nietzscheian critique of reality as linguistically constructed.

The Enlightenment project has its adherents both on the right and on the left – the classic debate has been between pro-market liberals and pro-statist socialists, both of whom accept the supremacy of reason as the arbiter of human destiny and as the primary tool to re-shape society. Those who debunk the Enlightenment project, on the other hand, resort to a sort of anti-rationalism or irrationalism. What Mignolo and the others add to this debate is a different set of knowledge systems which are subaltern because they have been suppressed or because they are generated on, or from outside, the borders of the dominant West. Mignolo has used the word gnosis or gnoseology to characterise these knowledge systems. For him alternatives to modernity are located in spaces outside the imperium, that is, outside the dominant West. He characterises "colonial difference" as the space "where *local* histories inventing and implementing global designs meet local histories, the space in which global designs have to be adapted, adopted, rejected, integrated, or ignored. The colonial difference is, finally, the physical as well as imaginary location where the coloniality of power is at work …" (ix). Border thinking or border gnosis is "the fractured locus of enunciation from a subaltern perspective … a response to the colonial difference" (x). So, gnosis here is a term given to knowledges which are suppressed by the dominant: "border thinking is more than a hybrid enunciation. It is a fractured enunciation in dialogic situations with the territorial and hegemonic cosmology" (x). One of the interesting contributions that Mignolo makes to the discourse of decolonisation is the proposal of a new kind of university, based on "*a critique of knowledge and cultural practices*" (xii), as opposed to the Kantian

university based on *reason*, the Humboldtian university based on *culture*, and the neo-liberal university based on "*excellence* and *expertise*" (xii).

Speaking of the connection between imperialism and knowledge systems, Mignolo points out how Spanish missionaries judged and ranked civilisations in terms of whether they possessed alphabetic writing. They used *translation* (especially of the Bible into these languages) to absorb this difference; *border thinking* works to restitute that difference (3). He alludes not just to Latin American border thinking, but also to African *gnosis*. The key text here is Valentin Mudimbe's *The Invention of Africa*. Mudimbe says that *gnosko* means "seeking to know, inquiry, methods of knowing, investigation, and even acquaintance with someone. Often the word is used in a more specialized sense, that of higher and esoteric knowledge" (ix). Mignolo, too, uses the word gnosis in a special sense, which needs to be understood:

> Border gnosis as knowledge from a subaltern perspective is knowledge conceived from the exterior borders of the modern/colonial world system, and border gnoseology as a discourse about colonial knowledge is conceived at the conflictive intersection of the knowledge produced from the perspective of modern colonialisms (rhetoric, philosophy, science) and knowledge produced from the perspective of colonial modernities in Asia, Africa, and the Americas/ Caribbean. Border gnoseology is a critical reflection on knowledge production from both the interior borders of the modern/colonial world system (imperial conflicts, hegemonic languages, directionality of translations, etc.) and its external borders (imperial conflicts with cultures being colonized, as well as the subsequent stages of independence and decolonization).... Finally, border gnoseology could be contrasted with territorial gnoseology or epistemology, the philosophy of knowledge, as we know it today (from Descartes, to Kant, to Husserl and all its ramifications in analytic philosophy of languages and philosophy of science): a conception and reflection on knowledge articulated in concert with the cohesion of national languages and the formation of the nation-state. (11)

I would like to invoke, however, the older meaning of the word gnosis. The Gnostics, a religious sect dating back at least to the first century CE, held that salvation came from knowledge or, what in India would be called *jnana*. But the moot question was knowledge of *what*. Hans Jonas, in *The Gnostic Religion,* says:

> As for *what* knowledge is about, the associations of the term most familiar to the classically trained reader point to *rational* objects, and accordingly to natural reason as the organ for acquiring and possessing "knowledge." In the gnostic context, however, knowledge has an emphatically religious or supranatural meaning and refers to objects which we nowadays should call those of faith rather than of reason.... *Gnosis* meant pre-eminently knowledge of *God*, and from what we have said about the radical transcendence of the deity it follows that "knowledge of God" is the knowledge of something naturally unknowable and therefore itself not a natural condition.... On the one hand it is closely bound with revelatory experience, so that reception of the truth either through sacred and secret lore or through inner illumination replaces rational argument and theory ... on the other hand, being concerned with the secrets of salvation, "knowledge" is not just theoretical information about certain things but is itself, as a modification of the human condition, charged with

> performing the function in the bringing about of salvation. *Thus gnostic "knowledge" has an eminently practical object.* (34)

Mignolo argues that the target of gnosis need not be God or salvation now but the "uncertainties of the borders": "Our goals are not salvation but decolonization" (12). But, I would suggest, that decolonisation is nothing but another name for a special kind of salvation, a secular salvation perhaps, or salvation from oppression, from inequality, and therefore from ignorance.

The problem before us today is that of postcolonial or planetary futures. I agree with Mignolo that "the future of diverse planetary civilisations" cannot simply be "the universalism of either Western neoliberalism or Western neo-Marxism" (8), and that "alternatives to modern epistemology can hardly come only from *modern* (Western) epistemology itself" (9). That is why I want to discuss the specific category of gnosis, to ask if it can be the basis for an alternative (post)modernity. Gnosis, which was a part of the Western semantics of knowledge, vanished after the ascendancy of rationality (9). The word was associated with Gnosticism, which was branded an anti-Christian sect by the Church fathers, thus giving it a bad name. Mignolo uses "gnosis and gnoseology" to suggest these alternative knowledge systems. *Gignosko*, the verb "to know," "to recognise" (like *jignasa*), and *epistemai*, "to know," "to be acquainted with," suggest two different conceptions of knowledge and knowing (9). In ancient Greek thought, gnosis emerges as a word to suggest a special or hidden kind of knowledge – but Greek philosophers do not establish a rigid distinction between gnosis and episteme (10).

To invoke the ancient Gnostics for just a minute longer, it is fundamental to recognise that "the God of the Gnostics is not the God of this world." According to Gerd Ludemann and Martina Janssen,

> The creator of the world to whom the Christians of the church pray is a "lower God" who out of envy leaves the human soul in ignorance about its heavenly home. The God who brings the Gnostic redemption is the good, unknown Father. He cannot be understood by human efforts. Accordingly, it can only be said of him what he is not. This "negative theology" occupies a good deal of space in all forms of Gnostic literature.... (17)

What this quotation actually suggests is that Gnostics had a totally different theology from the Christians, one that is closer to the Vedic view, which regards human beings as *amritasya putraha* or the children of immortality. In Gnosticism there is no original sin, purgatory, or damnation, nor is God a vengeful and punishing deity.

The Gnostics were branded as heretics by the Church and exterminated (11). What makes them special for us is that they believed in salvation by knowledge, *jnana*, or *vijnana* – the knowledge of the Self – not by dogmas of belief or some prescribed set of ritual practices: "For the Gnostic, knowledge is primarily self-knowledge … This knowledge brings it salvation and reunites it with the Pleroma (= fullness) from which it comes" (12). Of course, it is important to remember that Gnosticism is not uniform or homogenous, nor is it entirely Christian – there were Jewish, Iranian, Egyptian, as well as a philosophical Gnosticism (12). Some sects include the Mandaeans of southern Iraq, the Manichaeans, the Hermeticists, and the Neo-Platonists (12-13). For a long time the Gnostics were known only

by what was quoted against them by the heresiologists, until the discovery of the Nag Hammadi corpus around 1945 in a small town, in Egypt, by that name. Thirteen codices in Coptic were found which contained several Gnostic texts dating back to the fourth century CE. In his controversial book, *Black Athena*, Martin Bernal argues that much of the new knowledge, including the beginnings of modern science that erupted after the renaissance was due to the Greek transmission of Egyptian wisdom (121-60; ch. II). Bernal's thesis is that the triumph of the "Aryan Model" and the defeat of the "Ancient Model" coincided with the emergence of a violent, racist, intolerant, and dominating Western modernity which saw itself as specially privileged and superior to the rest of the world. However, according to the "Ancient Model" which had prevailed right up to the first half of the nineteenth century, ancient Greece, which was the source of modern Europe, was itself a creature of the even more ancient Egypt, which was an Afro-Semitic civilisation. What is pertinent to this paper from Bernal's argument is his positing of a holistic wisdom tradition, derived from ancient Egypt, as both the precursor and the source of modernity itself, until it is overthrown by the regime of modern rationality after the Enlightenment. He identifies three strands of this tradition which influenced, even triumphed, over Europe, until they were crushed: Hermeticism, Neo-Platonism, and Gnosticism. Before the advent of modern Egyptology, all of Egyptian wisdom was attributed to a single author, somewhat like Veda Vyasa in India. Called Hermes Trismegistos, this mythical figure was thought to be older than Moses. Major figures of the renaissance such as Copernicus, Giordano Bruno, and even Newton were hermeticists (161-88; ch. III). The other interesting aspect of Bernal's argument is that the European enthusiasm for India also served to diminish its regard for Egypt. Of course, like Egypt, India too had to be degraded and discarded in the nineteenth century for the emergence of a racist and supremacist imperial Europe (224-80; ch. V).

II

My paper is concerned primarily with India and what it has to contribute to this debate. What seems to me to be very important here is that India had a variety of knowledge systems in mutually supportive, dialogic relationships. In other words, it had smaller, localised, subaltern knowledge systems, some of which survive to this day among our so-called tribal populations. It also had extremely well worked out systems of rational thought, called the *shastras*. But what is more noteworthy is that its deepest philosophical urges were grounded neither in empiricism or rational speculation, but on what might be called wisdom or gnosis. It is commonplace to claim that Indian philosophy is intuitive while Western philosophy is rationalistic.

S. Radhakrishnan called it the contrast between "creative intuition" versus "critical intelligence" (as qtd. in Sinha 9). Both in Upanishadic and Buddhist thought, not *buddhi*, but *prajna* takes us to the Absolute (4). And yet, as Ramesh Chandra Sinha puts it, "though the Indian philosophical tradition does not regard reason as the supreme source of knowledge … it is reason which gives a coherent, systematic and consistent interpretation of intuitive experience" (9).

If I were to sum up my argument I would say that this paper takes as its inspiration Sri Aurobindo's critique of what might be termed Occidental reason. I initially came across it in what was almost a textual aside in a long polemic that Sri Aurobindo first mounted in his periodical *Arya*, from December 1918 to January 1921. These essays were later collected under the title "The Foundations of Indian Culture" and appeared as volume fourteen of the Sri Aurobindo Birth Centenary Library (SABCL).[1] The ostensible pretext for Sri Aurobinodo's critique was a wholesale dismissal of Indian culture by the noted drama critic William Archer. Archer's book, *India and Its Future*, is certainly forgotten today, though it was immortalised by Sri Aurobindo's detailed rebuttal. The second series consisting of seven essays that Sri Aurobindo wrote against Archer was called *A Rationalistic Critic on Indian Culture*. In essay four of this series, Sri Aurobindo says:

> Modern Europe separated religion from life, from philosophy, from art and science, from politics, from the greater part of social action and social existence. And it secularised and rationalised too the ethical demand so that it might stand in itself on its own basis and have no need or any aid from religious sanction or mystic insistence. (SABCL 14: 83)

It is after this remarkably clear but somewhat expected assessment of modernity that the radical insight occurs, almost carelessly tucked away in the corner of this larger polemic:

> At the end of this turn is an antinomian tendency, constantly recurring in the life-history of Europe and now again in evidence. This force seeks to annul ethics also, not by rising above it into the absolute purity of the spirit, as mystic experience claims to do, but by breaking out of its barriers below into an exultant freedom of the vital play. (SABCL 14: 83)

This struck me as quite a prophetic pronouncement on the anti-foundationalism of postmodernist thought, with its emphasis on absolute freedom and play, but which is not supra-rational as much as *anti*- or *ir*rational. Sri Aurobindo extended his critique of reason as the sole arbiter of human destiny in a series of essays first published in *Arya* from 15 August 1916 to 15 July 1918, and collected later as *The Human Cycle*. Here he states in detail why reason cannot deliver humanity:

> The whole difficulty of the reason in trying to govern our existence is that because of its own inherent limitations it is unable to deal with life in its complexity or in its integral movements; it is compelled to break it up into parts, to make more or less artificial classifications, to build systems with limited data which are contradicted, upset or have to be continually modified by other data, to work out a selection of regulated potentialities which is broken down by the bursting of a new wave of yet unregulated potentialities. (SABCL 15: 102)

Sri Aurobindo concludes that only a widespread spiritual transformation that will usher in a universal Spiritual Age will be the natural culmination of the human quest for individual as well as social perfection.

What emerges from such a critique is that the central philosophical enterprise of the West proceeds in cycles of affirmation and negation of a certain

[1] In the *Collected Works of Sri Aurobindo* (CWSA), designed to supersede the former, the contents, title, and volume number are different.

kind of rationality. In the last two hundred years or so, this has meant the enthronement of instrumental reason and then its recent repudiation at the hands of several thinkers. Neo-classicism, romanticism, modernism, and now, postmodernism also show traces of a similar cycle of affirmation and negation. Seeing its own history in terms of a progression from the pre-modern, to the modern, to the post-modern, the West has relegated other societies to a space equivalent to its own irrational past, thereby turning geography into history. However, I would like to argue that a civilisation such as India is neither pre-modern, nor modern. In fact, one cannot call it post-modern or anti-modern either, though that is how some choose to see it. I would argue that India is best understood either as a traditional or a non-modern society. What I mean by this is that it does not subscribe to the logic of History that the West has invented. In a non-modern society, what is central is neither rationality nor its opposite, but something else, call it wisdom, which includes but supersedes rationality. The debate between the West and India is not between modernity and tradition or between modernity and pre- or anti-modernity, but between modernity and non-modernity. Indeed, in the ultimate analysis, this is a debate between two kinds of rationality, two ways of seeing, two visions and versions of the world. A new global renaissance is possible not by rejecting or negating the West or by positing some kind of dissenting knowledge system against the dominant one, but by trying to change the world order on the basis of a mass inner awakening and transformation. In this process, wisdom, which is signified by the opening of the third eye, has to play a key role, not just the rationality-anti-rationality axis in which we seem to be ensnared at the present. The opening of the third eye is a symbolic way of suggesting the realisation of a higher consciousness; the third eye corresponds to the *ajnachakra* or forehead centre, the sixth chakra in the Yoga-Tantra system. It suggests the awakening of inner sight, or insight, what Sri Aurobindo calls "occult vision and occult power" (*Letters on Yoga,* SABCL 22: 372).

It seems to me that this aspect of Sri Aurobindo's thought has direct bearing on the crucial debate over the status and position of Enlightenment rationality within Western thought. The key text here is obviously Horkheimer's and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Composed during World War II, and in exile, this book is an anguished searching into the mind of Europe. How did fascism emerge in Europe in spite of the liberating ideals of the Enlightenment and the progressive Marxist doctrine of History? Their answer was sobering: "Enlightenment is totalitarian" (as qtd. in Young 7). The project of the Frankfurt school was to rescue the promise of the Enlightenment from the instrumental rationality that led to the will to power and to asphyxiating collectivism. If the Frankfurt School showed that irrationality lurked within the hidden recesses of rationality, the French poststructuralists went further, to interrogate, in Foucault's words, "the relations between the 'Western' project of a universal deployment of reason, the positivity of the sciences and the radicality of philosophy" (as qtd. in Young 8). He continues:

> In the history of the sciences in France, as in German critical theory, it is a matter at bottom of examining a reason, the autonomy of whose

> structures carries with it a history of dogmatism and despotism, a reason, consequently, which can only have an effect of emancipation on condition that it manages to liberate itself from itself. (as qtd. in Young 9)

While most poststructuralists, postmodernists, and postcolonialists are in agreement that a new type of knowledge needs to be invented or discovered, its precise definitions or characteristics elude consensus. At best this auto-critique of the dominant has only produced various forms of negative dialectics, an example of which is Foucault's intriguing assertion that reason needs to "liberate itself from itself." Typically, a positive statement of what this alternative epistemology will be is avoided for the fear that this in turn will prove to be oppressive and totalising. This is what accounts for what I have called the *chakravyuha* of much of postal thought: once you get in, you cannot get out; it is a sort of prison-house of language, to invoke the famous phrase of Paul de Man's, from which there is no exit. Much of postal thought thus, feeds off itself in a pathology of extreme self-reflexivity and narcissism. That is why it is useful to make it speak to another tradition, the so-called spiritual tradition of thought, which has addressed some of these concerns from a different location.

III

The remaining part of my paper will be an exposition of exactly what this means in Sri Aurobindo's scheme of spiritual evolution.

In *Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo uses the words *vijnana* and gnosis interchangeably, as synonyms (457). He defines these terms carefully because they are central to his argument; in fact, he devotes several chapters to them (chs. XXII-XXIV). For Sri Aurobindo:

> ... *vijnana* or gnosis is not only truth but truth-power, it is the very working of the infinite and divine nature; it is the divine knowledge one with the divine will in the force and delight of a spontaneous and luminous and inevitable self-fulfilment. By gnosis, then, we change our human into a divine nature. (457)

He clarifies that *vijnana* is not the same as *buddhi*, neither is *buddhi* the same as reason (457). He argues that those who consider *buddhi* to be the same as reason and consider these to be the highest mental faculty "pass at once from a plane of pure intellect to a plane of pure spirit" (457); their error is in mistaking "the limited human means for facing truth ... for the highest possible dynamics of consciousness" (457). "The opposite error" is to identify *vijnana* with "the consciousness of the Infinite free from all ideation" (457). For Sri Aurobindo, *vijnana* or gnosis is an *intermediate* power, at once "concentrated consciousness" and "infinite knowledge of the myriad play of the Infinite" (458). In other words, "it contains all ideation ... but is not limited by ideation" (458). Unlike reason, it is not "intellectual" or "mental" but "self-luminous, supramental" (458). That is, it is not accumulative, consciously deductive or inductive, but direct and spontaneous. Of course, Sri Aurobindo tells us rather intriguingly that there is a relation, even "a sort of broken identity between the two ... for one proceeds covertly from [the] other. Mind is born from that which is beyond the mind" (458).

But having said this, he is quick to show how different the two modes are – they belong, as it were, to different planes of consciousness. To complicate

matters further, he posits other levels between them, for instance, "intuitive reason," which is akin to *buddhi* – higher than reason, but lower than *vijnana*. Thought and its movements for Sri Aurobindo are slow, methodical, while intuition is quick and sure, a leap, a flash, "a supralogical process … of rapid insight or swift discernment" (459). But even this intuitive reason is not gnosis, "it is only an edge of light of the supermind finding its way by flashes of illumination" (460). But the elevation of the mind from the rational to the intuitive is itself an important step up the ladder of consciousness; Sri Aurobindo believes that we can train our minds to attain it by "purifying the interfering intelligence" but this is difficult because the mind in nature is "bound by the triple tie of mentality, vitality, corporeality to its own imperfection and ignorance" (461).

The difference between the two, between reason and gnosis is a fundamental one: the former proceeds from "ignorance to truth" but the latter from truth and "shows the appearances in the light of the truth" (462-63). As Sri Aurobindo maintains: "The reason proceeds by inference … but gnosis proceeds by identity or vision…. To the reason only what the senses give is direct knowledge, *pratyaksha* … to the gnosis all its truth is direct knowledge, *pratyaksha*" (463). To define gnosis thus in contradistinction to reason is, as Sri Aurobindo realises, still to adhere to the rational process. On its own terms, "it is hardly possible to speak of it except in figures and symbols" (465).

For Sri Aurobindo, gnosis is the link which can give us back our lost divinity. It is the bridge between the Supreme Reality of *Satchitananda* and the lower reality of our world; both are triads – infinite existence, consciousness, bliss, on the higher plane, and on the lower one – matter, life, and mind. That is why gnosis is not just light but power, "creative knowledge … the self-effective force of the divine Idea" (465). It is an embodiment of the will as "conscious force of eternal knowledge" (465). Described in the Vedas by the symbol of the sun, *tat savitur varennyam*, the whole creation has been inspired by this "divine delight, the eternal Ananda" (466). Indeed, the Supramental world that Sri Aurobindo wishes to herald is such a "true and happy creation, *rtam, bhadram*" (466). It is for gnosis to re-establish the link between Divine Nature, *Prakriti* as it is, and fallen nature, *prakriti* as she seems to be. In order to do so, *vijnana* has three powers: it receives supreme knowledge and transmits it; it concentrates supreme consciousness to act on matter; and it harmonises the "illimitable diversity" of manifestation with divine delight (466).

"As evolutionary beings, the *Purusha* or conscious being in us must ascend into the *vijnanamaya* so as to transform *Prakriti* …" This, according to Sri Aurobindo, is "the fundamental experience of the mental being transformed and fulfilled and sublimated in the perfection of the gnosis" (467). According to Sri Aurobindo, a human being is constituted of multiple materials. Therefore, all of us carry the effects of these materials which have gone into building us. The human, the *homo sapien*, or "man," as the root of the word suggests, is primarily a mental being. That is we are distinguished from other species by our ability to think, by the fact that we possess what may be called a mind. Men and women, thus, are so-called because of their minds, their *manas*. But we do not live in a mental world, except internally or occasionally. Our world is, in fact, primarily, physical.

Our whole quest in the march of civilisation which we call progress has been to gain greater and greater control over our physical environments. So, it is the physical existence that must be touched and transformed as the ultimate object of yoga. After all the proof of the pudding is in the eating – it is when this physical world around us is transformed that we can truly change the conditions of our existence.

How is this to be done? One way is to understand the nature of the physical itself. The body, made up of the gross elements, the same ingredients that make up matter, is nevertheless not untouched by something else, something other than itself and its own nature. The mental works on the body through the intermediacy of the nervous system. Even the most physical things that we experience are not without their mental component, or else we would never experience them. Between the mind and the body, connecting them both, is the vital, the *pranic*. According to the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, *prana* is the essence, the subtle substance of life. It is indestructible and of the same material as the eternal divine. While death overtakes the other organs, it is *prana* alone that death cannot capture (I.v.21).

By the same token, between the mind and what is above it, what is higher than it, are subtle connectors, sort of like an interface, which when activated, will help divinise our mental consciousness. That is the *vijnanamaya* sheath or envelope. This transformation of consciousness is what all yoga wishes to accomplish, regardless of the different philosophical or theological bases from which it proceeds. The ancient truth that the Kabbala presents was, "as above, so below." As the Tantras say, "What is here is elsewhere; what is not here, [meaning in the human body] is nowhere" (*Vishvasara Tantra*). In other words, there is a correspondence above the human, to what we experience in the human plane. Gnosticism would mean an awareness of this correspondence. "All will be originated from above; from above, all that corresponds in gnosis to our present mental activity takes place" (471). So there is already a higher mind than ours to which we have access, if we wish. Between the mental and the absolute is the Supramental or the gnostic; between the mental and the gnostic are a whole range of levels which Sri Aurobindo calls the overmind planes.

As we gradually ascend to higher levels of consciousness, the mental faculty expresses itself in a "differential rather than separative" fashion. The centre – the brain, the body – is still there, but it is merely for convenience, a point of reference, as it were; the being is not tethered to it, but expands and diffuses over a larger area. This is a different form of individuality or personality, one that operates universally: "It has become the awareness of an infinite being who acts always universally though with emphasis on an individual formation of its energies" (471). This state of consciousness may appear to be rather abnormal at first, but as Sri Aurobindo says, "it vindicates itself even to the mental intelligence by its greater calm, freedom, light, power, effectivity of will, verifiable truth of ideation and feeling" (471-72).

In this state, the ultimate truth, the infinite reality, becomes truer to us than the world of phenomenal existence: it becomes, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "the primal, the actual reality" (472). "In the plane of gnosis the infinite is at once our normal consciousness of being, its first fact, our sensible substance" (472),

unlike the "normal" state in which the finite, phenomenal world is our default mode of being, from which we rise only occasionally to glimpse "intimations of immortality." Once we are seized of, and by, this power of gnosis or *vijnana*, Sri Aurobindo believes that it has the ability to transform and reshape the very physical and material aspects of our being in accordance with its own nature. Krishnamurti and David Bohm spoke of a similar process but in a different terminology. The idea, however, was that the higher energy of gnosis, or intelligence, as Krishnamurti called it, can affect even the cells of the brain, altering them so that they function differently. This is the opening of the third eye, the rise of the *kundalini*, and the transformation of the *jiva* to Shiva or the *pashu* to *pashupati*.

According to Sri Aurobindo, in the *vijnanamaya*, "there is no place for sin; for all sin is an error of the will, a desire and act of the Ignorance" (474). As in Buddhism, "When desire ceases entirely, grief and all inner suffering also cease" (475). In the *Vijnana*, "the Divine is no longer veiled in *Maya*." Therefore, there is no *Jiva* who says "I think, I act, I desire, I feel" (476). What is left, instead, is the infinite play of, what Swami Muktananda called, *chitta-shakti vilasa* or, as Sri Aurobindo puts it, "God himself by his *Prakriti* knows, acts, loves, takes delight through my individuality and its figures and fulfils therein its higher and divine measures the multiple *lila* which the Infinite forever plays in the universality which is himself for ever" (476). The gnostic soul is akin to the supreme Godhead, free, but active, sovereign but taking delight in its apparent limitedness. The freedom that it enjoys is the same as nirvana, not an annihilation, but play.

An important distinction before I conclude this section: in Sri Aurobindo's scheme, this transformation is not just for a few select individuals, but for the whole human species. It will happen because the Supramental will be naturalised and normalised on earth just as mental consciousness was, a few million years ago. So, when this happens, what the earth will see is a quantum shift in consciousness, which will ensure that every dimension of human life – political, social, economic, cultural, and so on – will be radically transformed.

IV

This paper has been premised on the idea of a dynamic absolute that through its force of love and knowledge can act to transform this world. As such, it departs from notions of a static absolute aloof from this world or from ideas that regard the world itself as an illusion. This world as it appears may not be taken as the ultimate reality; indeed to do so would be to make a category error. Yet, whatever is, and appears to be, has some basis in reality. This much we must concede. Otherwise, any attempt to be agents of change in our world would be futile. In other words, we must act on the assumption that our collective efforts and intentions can, indeed do, change the world for the better. What is more, we might even go on to assert that such a change can actually be proposed, explained, discussed, accepted or rejected by other actors and agents. It is only through such ceaseless interaction, even striving, that some breakthrough will occur. The path forward, moreover, may not be a single one, but may have multiple branches and possibilities. It would be an unfortunate error to attempt to impose one uniform

prescription on the whole of humankind. My exposition of Sri Aurobindo's thought was to suggest one way forward, not to foreclose others.

The idea that the European renaissance of the fifteenth century was both incomplete and partial is not a new one. In the early nineteenth century, for instance, Friedrich Schlegel mooted the idea of an "Oriental Renaissance" (Clarke 55). The phrase itself occurs as the heading of a chapter in a book Edgar Quinet published in 1841 (Schwab 11). Raymond Schwab picked it up again towards the end of the last century, using it as the title of his book. As he says in the opening of the book,

> An Oriental Renaissance – a *second* Renaissance, in contrast to the first: the expression and the theme are familiar to the Romantic writers, for whom the term is interchangeable with Indic Renaissance. What the expression refers to is the revival of an atmosphere in the nineteenth century brought about by the arrival of Sanskrit texts in Europe, which produced an effect equal to that produced in the fifteenth century by the arrival of Greek manuscripts and Byzantine commentators after the fall of Constantinople. (11)

Of course, we might argue that what goes by the name of ancient wisdom was not especially Indian or Eastern, but prevailed in several parts of the world before the advent of modernity. What makes India special is the persistence of these traditions in a powerful and coherent form to this day.

Indeed, in the last two hundred years, there have been repeated attempts to bring Western and all such esoteric knowledge systems or "inner sciences" into some sort of grand synthesis. Apart from the more spiritualist attempts, such as the Theosophical or the New Age movements, such connections have existed in practically every branch of knowledge, including literature, philosophy, religious studies, and even in certain aspects of the "hard" sciences.[2] Even if these attempts have not succeeded entirely, we could argue that they have not failed totally either. It is therefore not only possible but highly desirable to push such endeavours forward. In this essay I have argued against two ways of (un)knowing – the absolutist rationalism that characterises the dominant strand of Western thought as well as the dissenting irrationalism of the postmodernists. Instead, a third way of knowing, suggested by the opening of the third eye, has been offered as the way forward. This way points to the development of a gnostic being with an enhanced consciousness, a being that may be better able to shape a global future for our numerous planetary civilisations.

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[2] See Clarke, *Oriental Enlightenment*, for an account of some of these dialogues.

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rejoinder

Consequentialism and the *Gita*: A Response to Amartya Sen[1]

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"Consequential Evaluation and Practical Reason" by Amartya Sen appears as the very first essay of the September 2000 issue of *The Journal of Philosophy*, published by the Department of Philosophy, Columbia University. *The Journal* is a reputed one in North America. Many trend-setting articles by eminent philosophers of the West have appeared in it in the past. In his article, Amartya Sen, a Nobel-laureate economist of Indian origin who is also well-known in the field of Ethics in Philosophy, contests the position of Sri Krishna in the *Gita*, without arguing out the issue in detail with the help of references to the text as well as the vast body of philosophical literature available on it in the tradition. His stand in the paper does not lead to any meaningful reference to the huge corpus of the epic, the *Mahabharata*, in which it is embedded. The primary thrust of the article, we must note, is not directed against the position of the *Gita*, which is mentioned only as an illustration to show how wrong deontology could be in Ethics, in order for the author to establish, in contrast, the viability of his own thesis of broad consequentialism. Sen, apparently, does not give enough importance to the scripture so as to devote a full-length paper in support of his position against it. He does not refer in his writing to any of the many analytical commentaries that developed on it over the millennia. As academics, we do expect to see that his argument is based not just on a cursory reading of the scripture, perhaps from a translation of the original for that matter, while our search for evidence of a

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detailed scholarship is frustrated. In fact, Sen fails to provide grounds for his expertise in the field of Indian philosophy at all in order to be effectively able to demonstrate the viability of the point he is making. Be that as it may, it is, however, quite likely that many of the readers of his article in the journal would take his summary rejection of Sri Krishna's position in the *Gita* for granted, mistaking Sen for an authority in Indian Philosophy. Since the Western readers of *The Journal of Philosophy* are primarily interested in philosophical issues, and not the history of ideas, they would not check out the exact interpretation of the *Gita* for themselves, but be satisfied with the broader philosophical points made by Sen. Taking him as an authority on Indic Studies, hoisted on the pedestal of his Nobel-laureate status, it would be quite normal for them to simply take for granted, after having read the article, that the *Gita* after all is worth nothing. Thus, by positing Sri Krishna's position as one that highlights the "classic argument" of "high deontology" in order to illustrate its utter poverty in the face of his own, Sen succeeds, even if unintentionally, in laying bare to his Western readers the sheer frivolity of Hinduism insofar as it is grounded on the scripture. He does not appear to have taken enough academic caution to inquire into the relevant supportive evidence, short of which his unguarded conclusions are apt to have an adverse impact on people all over the world, across the various faiths, in so far as they have found solace in the secular teachings of the *Gita*, and of Hinduism as such. This lack of caution on Sen's part might have been prompted, at least to an extent, by the possibility of a lack of academic response to the issue from qualified Indian readers, given the state of the study of humanities, including Indic Studies, in the subcontinent. After all, is it not simply amazing that the scholars in India are not even aware of Sen's article? Despite these troubling facts, however, in this rejoinder I have raised only academic issues pertaining to the philosophical debate involved. If I succeed in conveying my point, I will also have succeeded in showing that Sen has made statements on the *Gita*, which are plainly erroneous, apart from being supported by inadequate evidence, in a casual, methodologically suspect fashion, straying into areas apparently beyond his jurisdiction. The publication of his personal beliefs in an academic journal indeed hurts the image of the cultural tradition of India inasmuch as India is looked upon as having "expressed herself in the *Bhagavad Gita*" and "the preacher of the *Gita*" is viewed as having "given a unified shape to the thought of India at one single place" in it ("Dhammapadam" 461).

I

The Problem Sen Poses

In "Consequential Evaluation and Practical Reason," Sen makes it known to the readers his philosophical disapproval of Sri Krishna's advice to Arjuna in the *Gita*, vis-á-vis the latter's stand regarding not to fight and kill people "for whom he has affection." In the wake of defending his broad-based thesis of consequentialism, to be contrasted with the narrowly focused variety known as utilitarianism on the one hand, and the non-consequential deontological theses, on the other, Sen dwells at considerable length on the "classic argument" (479) of the

deontological variety, believed to be found in the *Gita*, where he notices that "insistence" is laid "on making *consequence-independent* judgments" (479). Sri Krishna's "high deontology," according to Sen, consists in his preoccupation that it is "Arjuna's duty to fight, irrespective of his evaluation of the consequences" (481), as the cause is just and the latter belongs to the fighter caste.[2] Arjuna, for his own part, is disturbed by the possible consequences of his action, viz., mass killing that would certainly include people for whom he has special affection. He is not particularly convinced by Sri Krishna's argument that "he cannot waver from his obligations (no matter what results from that)" (481), when he refuses to cause the devastation he considers undesirable. Sen finds Arjuna's consequentialist position commendable in the face of the allegedly deontological one posed by Sri Krishna, for "one must take responsibility for the consequences of one's actions and choices ..." (482). Sen is apparently at a loss that tradition in India has not sided with Arjuna's point of view, and has failed to find a detractor even in the modern pacifist of the stature of Mahatma Gandhi. Sen is rather amazed by the influence that Sri Krishna's position holds in Hindu theology and his "gradual transformation from being a noble but partisan patron of the Pandavas in the epic to being an incarnation of God, as he is in later Hinduism ..." (479).

II

The Answer

In this response I would like to contest Sen's readings of the points of view of Sri Krishna and Arjuna. I will attempt to show that Sri Krishna's position is consequentialistic, and not deontological, contrary to Sen's claim. As evidence of my argument, I will draw upon the interpretations of the *Gita* in the age-old tradition of Indian philosophy, over and above the straight readings of it. In the end I will indicate the contribution that Sri Krishna's variety of consequentialism may offer to Sen's.

Before starting our assessment of the line of thought as presented by Sen, I feel tempted to make a quick comment on his remark on the historical transition of Sri Krishna in the Hindu tradition of later days. If we look at "Bhishma Stavaraja" (*Mahabharata* 12.47), for example, we see the great Bhishma extolling Sri Krishna as God incarnate. Unless we are determined to categorise any such passage in the *Mahabharata* as an interpolation, thus taking an a priori stand on the issue to start with, we must admit that even during Sri Krishna's lifetime people were prone to accept him as a laudable incarnation of the supreme. This, indeed, is a minor point in the line of thought Sen advances in his paper in so far as the philosophical issues he deals with do not in any way depend on its validity. We, therefore, should move straight to the main ideas involved.

We have to keep in mind that the *Gita* contains the words of counsel

[2] Madhusudana Sarasvati, in his commentary *Shrimad-Bhagavad-Gita-gudharthadipika*, to *shloka* 2.31 of the *Gita*, refers to the saying of Parasara:

> The kshatriya will preserve the world according to dharma, protecting his subjects, arms in hand, meting out justice, while vanquishing other soldiers.

Sridhara Swami, in his *Subodhini Tika*, a commentary to the *Gita*, comments that for the kshatriya there is no preferable preoccupation "to the just war."

offered by Sri Krishna to his friend Arjuna when the latter is gripped by dejection, a situation diagnosed as coexisting with the predominance of *tamas* (lethargy and darkness), and considered detrimental to one's spiritual as well as psychological well-being. While taking note of the parameters pertaining to the state of affairs in which Arjuna should be spiritually, and morally, counselled, Sri Krishna does not lose sight of the fact that his dear friend is giving in to *tamas*. He surely does not "insist on an impoverished account of a state of affairs in evaluating it," (491) insofar as he includes the *sattva-rajas-tamas* (satisfaction-excitement-lethargy) dimension in it, in order to pay "particular attention to 'comprehensive outcomes' including actions undertaken, processes involved, and the like, *along with* the final outcomes, instead of confining attention to only the 'cumulative outcome' (what happens at the very end)" (491). The total process that Arjuna is involved in, in Sri Krishna's eyes, is certainly richer and more stratified, according to the requirements of Sen's broader consequentialism, than merely the killing or its absence. Sri Krishna takes a lot more into consideration while analysing Arjuna's sudden spurt of "affection" toward his near and dear ones which Sen so keenly highlights in order to bring to our attention the fact that Sri Krishna might have ignored it owing to his allegedly deontological moorings.

Sri Krishna, we should not forget, was not intent on the war to start with. It was never a deontologically foregone conclusion for him. He had tried his best to avert it, even at the cost of severe possible privation for the five Pandavas, as when a proposal was made to settle the share of the kingdom with the Pandavas' entitlement restricted to five villages only. The war was arrived at consequentially. Sri Krishna's exhortations to Arjuna are not dictates. At the very end of the long deliberation in the *Gita*, he asks Arjuna, "the friend of his choosing," to act "as he thinks best" (*Gita* 18.63-4). Given Sri Krishna's theological position of omnipotence in the *Gita*, he does not need Arjuna's help to win the battle. However, he wants Arjuna to be existentially involved in the state of authentic existence when the latter is in an extreme state of dejection with his "mouth parching," "limbs weakened," "body trembling," so much so that the bow Gandiva, that he refuses to part with ever, "slips off the hand," his "brain is whirling round and round," and he "cannot keep standing any longer" (*Gita* 1.28-30). This certainly is not a state of *sattvika* compassion (i.e., love in its true form) that Arjuna has for his near and dear ones, but one of loss of life's balance, some kind of cowardice that has infected the great hero.[3] Instead of taking this to be a reaction on moral grounds, we need rather to consider Arjuna's refusal to fight as a psychological reaction on his part which it is incumbent on Sri Krishna to take care of through the process of counselling. In order to make the right moral decision, the former must have the right psychological balance first. All this, needless to say, is consequential calculation on Sri Krishna's part.

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[3] Ananda Giri, in his commentary to *shloka* 1.29 of the *Gita* says that the expression "trembling" signifies fear. Swami Vivekananda in his *Karma-Yoga* says, "Arjuna became a coward at the sight of the mighty army against him ..." (39).

Sri Krishna does not insist that an action constitutes duty for all, for he knows that,

> When someone has found delight, peace and satisfaction in the Self, he is not bound by the constraint of duty.
> He has nothing to gain in the world by action, nor anything to lose by refraining from it. He is independent of all considerations regarding things. (*Gita* 3.17, 18)

Such a person belongs to another world, the presuppositions for life being absolutely different for him, as contrasted with the others around. Since Arjuna has not reached such a state yet, Sri Krishna counsels him to fight, which, indeed, the former has come prepared to do, till he loses his psychological balance. Apart from Arjuna's need to go back to a "required" state of mind from where he can grow psychologically, ethically and spiritually, it is also questionable whether he can relinquish his commitment as a leader to the Pandava army as its General all of a sudden, at the very last moment, since he has come to the battlefield with this very purpose. At any rate, he has to get over his stupor immediately, which he confuses with compassion, in order, finally, to be in a position to make the decision that suits him. It is weakness and cowardice against which Krishna incites Arjuna, not love. In fact when love takes the form of cowardice, it indicates a real existential fall. When maintenance of justice is the principle involved, it is incumbent on the kshatriya (the warrior) to adopt the appropriate means, including taking up arms, if need be (see footnote 2). Here Sri Krishna is inciting Arjuna to fight in the consequential consideration of maintenance of justice.

III

Karmayoga and Consequentialism

To repeat, Arjuna has yet to grow psychologically, and spiritually, to be able to attain the state of freedom where all duties evaporate. Till then, he must perform the duties pertaining to his station in life, according to his *svadharma* (specific constitution), in the proper way, i.e., in all seriousness, by maintaining a phenomenological detachment from the possible results of the actions undertaken, be they successes or failures. Actions *are* undertaken toward success, although success, or its opposite, failure, must not overshadow the psyche of the one performing them. The sense of duty dictates that there must not be any slackness in the actions performed in anticipation of the result. Arjuna is a General, indeed a kshatriya, of the *rajasika* (extrovert) type, and Sri Krishna knows that fighting for the just cause is in his very nature. He diagnoses Arjuna's refusal to fight not as ahimsa (non-violence) but as stupor triggered by infatuation. "If, in your vanity," he says to Arjuna, "you think you will not fight, your resolve will verily be in vain, for your nature will induce you to the act" (*Gita* 18.59). Thus, Sri Krishna inspires the latter to take up his arms in a battle he is justified to fight. Executed in the right spirit, the act will prepare him for the state of freedom, which is yet another consequential consideration on Sri Krishna's part. Krishna certainly does not subscribe to the Kantian categorical imperative insofar as we see him taking the consequences of an action into consideration while maintaining the mystic, phenomenological detachment, which ensures the quality of life and a greater effectiveness in handling things. Fighting, or its absence, is not

deontologically Arjuna's duty. Here it is both the act as well as the attitude associated with it that relate to the concept of duty in a consequential frame of reference. This is the upshot of *karmayoga* (i.e., the *yoga* of action).

Karmayoga is the "technique of action" (*Gita* 2.50). One might, however, suspect it to have a deontological mooring in view of Sri Krishna's advice to Arjuna to fix his attention to the "domain of the action only, and not its consequences" (*Gita* 2.47). The idea is: if one is encouraged to dissociate from the consequences of the action, how can the theory be said to promote consequentialism? Our position, in the light of all that has been said already, is that the theory is indeed consequential, based on the consideration that it allows us to choose and plan for a course of action to follow. If, however, *karmayoga* implies distancing oneself totally from whatever consequences result from the action undertaken, then it is virtually impossible to plan a course of action in the context where the results of a set of actions become the basis for other actions to be undertaken toward the completion of the plan. If Sri Krishna is advising Arjuna to be insensitive to consequential considerations in the war he is encouraging the latter to fight, it may not be possible for the latter to heed the words of his friend to take part in the fight without, at the same time, going back on those very words in not following the consequential strategies fighting necessarily involves. Sri Krishna is aware that whereas deciding on courses of action according to the rational process of evaluative choice is in one's own hands, success or failure following the courses of action pursued, is not. He advises Arjuna not to be overpowered by success or failure even as actions are undertaken on consequentialistic considerations. According to Shankara, Sri Krishna is advising Arjuna to get rid of the "thirst for the result of the action" (Shankaracharya; *Gita* 2.47), that is, a greed for it. The only consequentialistic parameter, in other words, that he advises Arjuna to rise above is extreme attachment manifest in intense joy of achievement, or grief for loss (*Gita* 2.38). Greed, often suspected as the motivating force behind modern civilised society, is rooted in extreme attachment that isolates individuals in the society, instead of providing a unifying bridge between them. Sri Krishna counsels Arjuna, and certainly does not dictate, to get over it, to an extent, in an existential process, by dissociating himself attitudinally from the joys of achievement and frustration of failure, in the midst of the planning process toward maintenance of justice, that includes the consequential consideration of others' benefits (*Gita* 3.25). A minimal of mastery of this attitude to life is a must for all actions performed, including the ones pertaining to welfare economics toward its proper functioning and success. The motive for action here is not pleasure but the attainment of unconditional joy, to be aware of, in other words, what is innately present, which indeed is an overarching consequential consideration, as we hinted before.[4] In his commentary on verse 2.46 of the *Gita*, Madhusudana Sarasvati says:

> The intention (in Sri Krishna's words to Arjuna here) is this: When your mind is pure with practice of actions without attachment, the consciousness of the self will dawn, and you will partake of the joy of the *Brahman* (the ultimate Truth). The urge to partake of petty pleasures will evaporate when all Joy is with you. Therefore, practise action without attachment in order to

reach the highest joy on the basis of the highest knowledge.

IV

The *Gita* and Sen's *Broader Consequentialism*

To my mind, Sri Krishna's exhortations to Arjuna could very well be accommodated under the broader consequentialism that Sen advocates, with the important proviso that the precondition for performance of any action as a duty in the *Gita* is an attempt at distancing oneself from greed. Success at that attempt, even in a limited measure, "saves one from great fears," says Sri Krishna (*Gita* 2.40). This overall precondition for action, too, as we noted already, has a consequential ring about it. The goals are peace and satisfaction, for the individual in society, in and through a balance that prevails in justice. Here satisfaction is interpreted not in sensual terms, but in reference to a psychology where pleasure is subsumed in the phenomenological state of peace and harmony. Peace coexists with an inner and outer balance, in a broad, over-encompassing spell of justice that touches the ecological, the individual and the social levels.

This is the main difference between Sri Krishna's position and Kant's. According to the latter the goodness of an action consists in the *good will* (*Metaphysic of Ethics* 11) determined by the motive of the action, apart from the benefits flowing from it as a consequence, whereas, according to the former, consequential consideration is important. Although Kant's *good will* has welcome consequences, it is not constituted by their consideration at all. In other words, insofar as the *good will* determines the goodness of an action, the consequences are irrelevant. For Kant, once an action is considered a duty, it must be performed for its own sake, not in consideration of achievement of consequences, or following one's inclination for them, however laudable it is. For Sri Krishna, performance of a good act is a spiritual journey toward achieving virtues that are sure springboards for such acts. He is ready to lie, on some rare occasions, if the act leads to a greater end. To be properly charged in the affective mode towards performance of a good action, that results in a greater good for the individual as well as the society, is what his advice in the *Gita* is all about. The imperative, viz., that Arjuna must fight, for the kshatriya has the responsibility to fight for justice, is not categorical. At most it is an instance of rule-consequentialism. However, the rule here is conditional, as circumscribed by act-consequentialistic considerations in so far as one must perform the kind of action most conducive to one's unfolding toward the final existential goal of freedom. Actions undertaken for the benefit of others, taking all of life into consideration, are part of this unfolding process. The rule for a kshatriya to fight comes under such consequentialistic considerations.

Sri Krishna emphasises the importance of action in the effective functioning of

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[4] It is worth developing a model in ethics and philosophy of religion here, paralleling the linguistic model of Chomsky, incorporating some of its broad features, which would point to the universality of ethics and spirituality. With all their richness and complexity, the universal elements are innate at the deep level, and manifest themselves in the variant surface forms in societies, giving rise to different ethical customs and religions. The *Gita* specifically speaks about the same goal for the divergent ways of religious pursuit (e.g., 4.11, 7.21-2, 9.23). It is worth noting that in keeping with the spirit of the *Gita*, the Ramakrishna Mission accepts "one's own freedom as well as benefit to the world" as its goals.

society at a time when social maladies are rife and leadership is lacking. He connects performance of action in the proper spirit to spiritual practice towards attainment of freedom, which is the goal of life. Action is important and cannot be shunned, under ordinary circumstances, in the consequentialist frame of reference. Gandhi concurred with this point of view, which explains his allegiance to the *Gita*. Pacifist as he was, he may be seen as having sided with the allied forces in order to put an end to oppressive moves under an emergency situation.

V

Tagore on the *Gita*

It might be of some interest to look at Tagore's ideas in this area. The poet says:

> Freedom and power form a unity in continuity. Peace and beauty lie only in this. It is the confluence of the two that we search for in life – viz., of the never-ending flow of the river of action into the deep ocean of becoming. The *Gita* marked this satisfying get-together, and said: "Act, but do not hanker after the result." (*Java Yatrir Patra* 469)

Again, he says elsewhere:

> What is the reason for Sri Krishna to opt for the path of action in the *Gita* as the best for humanity? The reason is that indulging in action adds strength to the capacity to act and helps build spiritual power. It is action, in other words, that channels all human tendencies, as well as restrains them.... The best course is to take to action guided by the tendencies, and give them their required shape through restraint.... Trying to throttle the tendencies through denial of their food is a mere technique of spiritual lethargy. ("Ahar Sambandhe Chandrababur Mat" 463-64)

In the new value system that Sri Krishna introduces in the *Mahabharata*, he has given a new interpretation to the expression *yajna* (meaning sacrifice). In the fourth chapter of the *Gita*, in *shloka* 28, Sri Krishna enumerates the six different meanings for the expression *yajna* in the tradition, such as making gifts of things, undergoing self-imposed privations and austerities with a resolute will, following the steps of *rajayoga*, study of the scriptures, attempt at analytically deciphering their meanings, and mastering the virtues such as ahimsa (non-violence) in their universal application.[5] However, all six kinds of sacrifice are to be subsumed under the concept of sacrifice of each and every action performed in the proper spirit of non-attachment that Sri Krishna advocates. Tagore says:

> ... the problem arises when the limitless desire of humankind is for narrow selfish ends. The human desire becomes meaningful only when it is geared toward everybody. This is what the *Gita* calls the *yajna*. Society is sustained by it only. The way to this *yajna* is action without desire. Such action will never be weak, it will never be petty. However, we have to ensure that it is not meant just for one's own gain. (*Java Yatrir Patra* 455)

No action, according to the way of the *Gita*, is outside the jurisdiction of the Lord, who encompasses everything, including the performer (see *Isha Upanishad*, verse 1). Thus, the right spirit is not to abstain from action, but to perform it as pertaining to God. This spirit is highlighted in the *shloka*:

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[5] See the commentary of Madhusudana Sarasvati on verse 4.28 of the *Gita*. Here Madhusudana indicates that the other *yajnas* that Sri Krishna has mentioned immediately before this *shloka* (viz., 26 and 27), and after (29), are subsumed within the six enumerated here.

> It is Brahman (the ultimate Truth) to whom the offering is made, He is the offering, made by the one who is He, in the fire that is He Himself; the ritual, which again is He, leads on to an attainment that is verily the Brahman. (*Gita* 4.24)

There is a pronounced emphasis here on an ever-encompassing, phenomenological aspect of God, apart from the ontological, later developed by Tagore in his unique way of philosophising.[6] Life, after all, is a holistic process. Knowledge coexists with *ananda* (joy unbound), and does not sever itself from action. Once we accept the distinction between the two faces of truth, *satya* and *rta* – one factual and the other existential – knowledge pertaining to the latter kind transcends the cognitive dimension and spills over onto, and encompasses, the affective, connecting itself with the dimension of values that leads to action. This points to our universal "form of life" at the deep level where *karmayoga* fits in. Sri Krishna's new interpretation of *yajna* is indeed intimately tied with his doctrine of *karmayoga*. The "other" can never be lost sight of. Thus, action always has its place, pointing to a new dimension of work ethics. "By doing works other than for sacrifice," says Sri Krishna, "this world of men is in bondage to works; for sacrifice practise works, O son of Kunti, becoming free from all attachment" (*Gita* 3.9, trans. by Sri Aurobindo, *Essays on the Gita* 101-02).[7] Needless to say, all this holds in the consequentialistic frame of reference.

VI

Conclusion

In the above I have shown that Sri Krishna advises Arjuna to fight on consequential considerations. First, Arjuna must be ready to face the eventualities of life and not be paralysed by debilitating emotion. Second, there is the consideration of justice, both for the Pandava brothers themselves and the people of the kingdom. The fight is the means to settle the brothers' scores regarding entitlement to the share of the kingdom, and it gives the people at large the opportunity to prosper under a just rule at a time when there is a void in the political landscape of the subcontinent. Peace and prosperity can be achieved only when actions are performed with a selfless attitude, i.e., as pertaining to *karmayoga*, while greed and pleasure-seeking fade away, well-entrenched though they are in the politico-economic institutions. Arjuna, the agent, is ultimately seen as taking responsibility for his own choice, at the end of a protracted deliberation, in heeding the advice of his friend and the consequences following from it. He readies himself to the goal of real

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[6] For details see Rabindranath Tagore, *The Religion of Man and Sadhana: The Realization of Life*. Also refer to Sitansu S. Chakravarti, "The Spirituality of Rabindranath Tagore: The Religion of an Artist."

[7] This translation by Sri Aurobindo, along with his comments pertaining to the *shloka*, reflects the spirit of Madhusudana Sarasvati's commentary on it, where *yajna* covers all action. I feel tempted to give partial translation of this commentary:

> The saying in the Smriti (i.e., the tradition of Hindu Law), viz., "People are bound by actions" signifies that all action relates to bondage; so those desirous of attaining freedom better shy away from it. Anticipating this (objection to work as such, Sri Krishna) says: … If work is done for the sake of God, it does not bind. Therefore, you, son of Kunti, who have responsibility for action, perform it as sacrifice, without attachment, but perfectly, i.e., with all (seriousness and) respect.

freedom to be achieved through selfless action, another consequentialistic consideration indeed present in the *Gita*. It is quite appropriate that Sen refers to the message of Sri Krishna in the *Gita* in his paper on consequentialism. However, the relevance of the message is clear only when it is understood in its proper consequentialistic moorings. The ideal for Gandhi, who is mentioned in Sen's paper, was similar to that depicted by Sri Krishna. No wonder, Gandhi found *karmayoga* of importance to his own goal toward its achievement in an effective way, insofar as the means help maintain the quality of life that the goal incorporates. Both Arjuna, as well as Gandhi fare, I claim using Sen's words, "well," and not just "forward" (482) in life's journey.

The above analysis suggests, by way of implication, that Indian philosophy and spirituality have a sophisticated, ancient scholarly tradition, stretching down to the modern times, which can hardly be ignored while any criticisms are attempted. Indeed, morality in the Indian tradition has a strong philosophical basis, grounded on an inclusive, and other-encompassing spirituality, which is able to contribute to the Western philosophical tradition today only if the latter can open itself to "outside" influence. However, there is need for a strong grounding in the Eastern system, found missing in Sen's handling of the issues in the *Gita*, in order for one to benefit from it philosophically. Gandhi's thoughts have had some welcome influence in the recent ethical thinking in the West. The *Gita* was the inspiration behind this great soul. It is quite likely that a proper, academic study of the *Gita*, and not a cursory reading of it in bits and pieces, as seems to transpire from Sen's writing, may lead to further insights in the direction.

Before I conclude, it may not be out of place to mention my experience with regard to the publication of this rejoinder in North America. I had thought it fit to first send it to *The Journal of Philosophy* where the original article had appeared. The journal readily rejected it without giving any reasons. I can only surmise that the fact that discussion on the *Gita* does not occupy the central position in Sen's article may have been their reason for not publishing my rejoinder. To the average Western reader, it certainly does not matter whether there is a misinterpretation of the Hindu scripture so long as the main point in the paper is brought home to her through this illustration. However, given the magnitude and the implication of the misinterpretation, in view of the harm it can cause to the tradition of an ancient culture, with which Sen may not be acquainted well enough at its depth at the level of philosophy and spirituality, the journal owes its readers a responsibility that they be exposed to an academic, philosophical discussion on the topic from the other angle.

The other journal I subsequently sent the article to focuses on Eastern and Western philosophy. I expected that here after all the Eastern perspective would find its proper place. The "expert" referee of the paper, however, did not find it worth publishing, not because she agreed with Amartya Sen instead of me, but because she found "both clearly wrong." "The *Gita*," she thought, "is not a philosophical text, and cannot be given a consistent philosophical reading one way or the other." Certainly if the *Gita* goes, down, too, goes Vedanta Philosophy, which is an attempt at finding a unified meaning in the *Gita*.

Indeed, she has a very consistent view that would negate the *Gita* with Vedanta Philosophy, in combination. Perhaps, she can extend her sense of consistency to accommodate the whole of what goes by the name of Indian Philosophy, and declare that no such thing exists. The point that the "expert" missed, however, is really the point I have expanded on in this rejoinder – that the text of the *Gita*, however resistant it may be to one reading of consistency, has a whole tradition built around it. In other words, the text does not exist just by itself, fragmentary, or as a whole, but along with the interpretations woven around, constituting its hermeneutics. Justified hermeneutics, after all, is what philosophy is about.

The upshot of the above, I think, is that we need to emphasise not just Indic studies, as accommodating Indian Philosophy, but Philosophy as such, accommodating Indic studies. Problems indeed arise at the meeting ground of the two when people doing Indic Studies are not good enough in Philosophy or when good scholars do not pay justified attention to the Indic Studies however good they be in Philosophy.

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The U-Turn Theory: An Introduction

Rajiv Malhotra

The History of this Theory

IN 1996, A FOUNDATION I am associated with wanted to give grants for teaching Indian Philosophy in American universities. Just recently I had had a life transforming experience that I felt should be shared more widely with the youth, based on an understanding of its philosophical underpinnings. In trying to enrich the lives of students with Indian thought, I came across a series of surprises and rude encounters. These drew me deeper into examining the inner workings of the academe and American intellectual life in general. The following is a simplified sequential list, whereas the actual experience was far more complex:

Rajiv Malhotra is an Indian-American entrepreneur, philanthropist and community leader who, since the last ten years, has devoted himself to clarifying the many misperceptions about Indic traditions in America. He came to the US in 1971 to pursue graduate studies in Physics and Computer Science. He then worked as a senior executive in several multinational companies, and as a private entrepreneur. His career spanned the computer, software and telecom industries. He now works full-time with The Infinity Foundation, a non-profit organisation in Princeton, New Jersey, which he founded in 1995, to foster harmony amongst the diverse cultures of the world.

Surprise No. 1

I quickly found out that Indian Philosophy was not being taught in most US Philosophy departments, except very superficially. Only two Philosophy departments of mainstream American universities give Ph. Ds in Indian Philosophy – Hawaii and the University of Texas (Austin) – and there was little interest in changing this state of affairs in the leading universities.

Furthermore, Western philosophers openly said that *there is no such thing as Indian Philosophy.* When I tried to argue by citing examples of Indian Philosophy's relevance in influencing American thought, I was told that those examples were from Psychology, New Age or Religious Studies, but that Philosophy per se did not recognise them or have any use for them.

Surprise No. 2

I moved on to these other disciplines, and started to participate in every conference I could find in the

thriving academic areas known as consciousness studies, mind-body healing, transpersonal psychology, mind sciences, philosophy of science, and others. I read research papers and books to understand the state of affairs in these.

To my surprise, while many ideas were clearly of Indian origin, these were presented with no reference to their Indian roots. Instead, they were usually repackaged as Greek and/or European thought, or ones with a Judeo-Christian spin. I started to confront the scholars, and some of these encounters are elaborated in this essay.

One of the several reasons given by scholars for publicly distancing themselves from Indian thought (while utilising it at the same time) was the terribly negative associations with Hinduism, in particular. (There seemed to be little problem in acknowledging Buddhist sources explicitly.)

Furthermore, it bothered me that there was virtually no representation of Indians in these academic events, and the few Indians who participated were either keen to show that they had nothing to do with their traditions, or were adopting the position that Indian thought could just as easily be mapped as a subset of Western thought, and had little to offer in, and as, itself.

Surprise No. 3

The negative image of Hinduism in the academe (by now I had also begun to independently track the same in school and media portrayals) led me to the Religious Studies Departments. I also started to monitor the conferences and publications of Religious Studies. There I learnt that the curriculum on Hinduism was not mainly about explaining its deeper meanings or practices. Nor did it make an honest and serious attempt to make sense of these traditions in the lives of students today.

Instead, it was mainly about the anthropology of poor villagers in India, the abuse of women, dowry, sati, Dalits, and so forth. This was clearly not the Hinduism that I knew. It seemed to be either the Christian missionary view, or the view of Marxist, Freudian and various other kinds of Eurocentric lenses. Shockingly, many learned Sanskrit scholars had joined in this "caste, cows, curry" theories of exotica. Indian students were rapidly being brainwashed to hate their past and their culture, and parents being too busy in their own lives could hardly provide a corrective influence.

Surprise No. 4

I was so concerned that I started to go around explaining this to Hindu preachers and to Diaspora community leaders. But they disagreed with me vehemently: "We are 5,000 years old," they said, "and nothing can harm us. There are so many excellent books written by our gurus that are available in temples and ashrams, whatever these academic scholars have to say is irrelevant."

I tried to explain that the gurus' books were not being prescribed in the education system because the system used materials written by other academic scholars using certain literary theories and hermeneutics. "Don't worry because all paths lead to the truth," I would be told by the community leaders. "We should not be negative and think positive only," was another common reason for doing nothing.

Either these leaders were too sure that they knew of everything that was going on (without ever having gone outside

their little cocoons to find out), or else they were very quick to dismiss these findings.

I attempted to present reports on the way Chinese, Japanese, Koreans, Arabs, Blacks and other minority groups were engaging the education system to get fair treatment. These also fell on deaf ears: "Why should we copy others," said a few lofty voices, "when we are superior to them?"

Surprise No. 5

I started to systematically compile the variety of positive Indian cultural influences upon contemporary American society. These are summarised later in this series. I wondered: How could it be that those who learnt so much from India were denying it, and were instead busy denigrating the same source? This led me deeper into the study of the history of dozens of famous Westerners who had engaged with India very intimately, and I started to see a pattern – one of learning from India followed by a distancing of themselves from it.

I met many excellent American scholars along the way who have helped me a great deal and who have become friends and partners in this journey.

Surprise No. 6

Indians in the humanities disciplines and media often seemed India-friendly publicly, especially in front of other Indians. But their scholarship was towing the line as established by the system they were a part of. In fact, I realised that some of the dirtiest work against Indian culture was being done by Indians who were ever eager to oblige and impress their Western colleagues. This role being played by Indians came as a surprise to the Hindu and Diaspora leaders, who simply did not want to believe in the possibility of such a scenario, and instead tended to dismiss them as a few isolated incidents.

Surprise No. 7

I have also examined the funding sources for scholarship on India in the West, and other relevant gate-keeping institutions, and have developed a theory of how institutionalised biases are transmitted to subsequent generations of scholars and students. This is often done in ways that seem very transparent and even positive. Many individuals who are cogs in a giant wheel are unaware of the broader implications of their work.

Surprise No. 8

Liberal arts education in the US is based on a set of theories which interpret texts, music, art, culture and society, in general. Students read the books where these theories are explained, demonstrate their understanding by writing book reviews or critiques on them, and then practise how to apply these theories to a variety of topics of current interest.

This set of intellectual tools, sometimes called "literary theory" or "hermeneutics," is fashioned entirely by Westerners and non-Westerners operating within the Western intellectual system. These include Marx, Freud, Saussure, Lacan, Barthes, Kristeva, Althusser, Foucault, Derrida, Lyotard, Habermas, Baudrillard, Jencks, Laclau, Mouffe, Said, Fanon, Spivak, Bhabha, Beauvoir, Greer, among others.

Many of them have spawned brand named "theories" that now serve as intellectual tools with which students are required to demonstrate their abilities. These are often equated to natural laws discovered by the natural sciences.

These icons and their theories are

larger than life today, and are assumed as authorities in the same sense as Vedic Indians assume the authority of the Vedas. Hence, these thinkers are treated like modern rishis in the humanities today. To be a scholar today means being able to demonstrate your arguments based on one of more of these "theories." Conversely, I have been told by many experts that one's writings are dismissed as "unscholarly" if they fail to establish that they are based on and are compliant with some such "theories."

I found myself agreeing with many aspects of these theories, and even finding that many of these ideas could be found within Indian texts that gave them deeper interpretations. At the same time, I also disagreed with many central tenets in these theories.

It became clear that the reason why so many Indian scholars and writers have become self-alienated is that these theories have permeated intellectual circles, and are often unconsciously applied without question.

An Indian critique of literary theory would be a fascinating project, but that is a future possibility. Meanwhile, I request the reader to set aside the foregoing autobiographical account about my personal interest in this field, and to focus on the new conceptual framework being proposed in this series.

A New "Theory"

The U-Turn Theory introduced here is a conceptual model that explains the vast array of data that I have gathered in these years. It is a framework in which one may analyse interactions between cultures and even sub-cultures. It addresses issues about how cultural elements are transferred between cultures, especially when there is an asymmetry of power involved.

The version presented here is a *subset* of a bigger and more comprehensive model that I hope to publish later. It is my hope that this proposed new theory shall be further developed and improved over time, and that it shall also become one of the intellectual tools in use.

It is important to bear in mind that the theory describes a set of *liberal* processes, and, hence, it has aroused considerable anxiety amongst many liberals, because they regard it as a direct contradiction of their cherished self-image as non-chauvinistic people.

This essay positions subsequent writings that shall focus on specific examples of U-Turns in a variety of fields, including: Mind-body health sciences; literature, literary theory, and the emerging new philosophies; Judeo-Christianity; American political liberalism; Western feminism.

My starting point was to understand the ways in which the dominant Western culture has been rapidly appropriating Indian mind sciences and then erasing the origins. This involves a brief introduction to the Indian mind sciences.

The Indian Mind Sciences

Eugene Taylor, a well-known Harvard professor of psychology and cognitive sciences, explains how meditation "is fast appearing in unexpected places throughout modern American culture" (1-32):

> Secretaries are doing it as part of their daily noon yoga classes. Preadolescent teenagers dropped off at the YMCA by their mothers on a Saturday morning are learning it as part of their karate training. Truck drivers and housewives in the Stress Reduction Program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center are

> practicing a combination of Hindu Yoga and Buddhist insight meditation to control hypertension. Star athletes prepare themselves for a demanding basketball game with centering techniques they learned in Zen.

He then goes on to explain the historical origins of meditation in India:

> *Dhyana* is the generic Sanskrit term for meditation which in the *Yoga Sutras* refers to both the act of inward contemplation in the broadest sense and more technically to the intermediate state between mere attention to an object (*dharna*) and complete absorption in it (*Samadhi*). The earliest known references to such practice on the Indian subcontinent occurs on one of the seals, a figure seated in the lotus position, found in the ruins of the pre-Aryan civilizations at Harappa and Mohenjodaro which existed prior to 1500 BCE. Most of the orthodox Hindu schools of philosophy derive their meditation techniques from yoga, but superimpose their own theoretical understanding of consciousness onto the results of the practice.

Yoga and meditation are rooted in indigenous Indian theories of self and mind. While Western notions of religion always start with God "out there" as the fundamental premise and, therefore, belief in God is often the very definition of what religion is about, Indian traditions often start with an inquiry into the nature of the self.

This inner inquiry has led to the development of many techniques of meditation, which adepts are able to use to achieve various higher states of consciousness. A variety of theoretical models emerged over time, to explain and classify these mental states. The experiences and models were debated intensely among rival schools of inquiry in classical India. The systems of knowledge that evolved over centuries of this process are sometimes referred to as *adhyatma-vidya* or inner sciences.

One could easily consider Patanjali in the second century CE to be one of the earliest systematic scholars of the mind sciences in the world. His famous *Yogasutras* contain an elaborate theory and framework for understanding the mind, various practices to achieve specific states, and descriptions of what the practitioner experiences at each stage.

But even prior to Patanjali, many Indian texts, including Samkhya, Upanishads, Buddhist and Jaina texts, were based on extensive inner experiences resulting from disciplined practices. The philosophy of language was based on theories of the mind. Subsequently, many other traditions emerged, including Kashmir Shaivism, and Tantra, each based on a systematic exploration of the mind.

The closest that the Western tradition comes to meditation is what it refers to as mysticism. But as Taylor explains, there is a difference between Western mysticism and Eastern meditation. Here is how he describes Western mysticism:

> Indeed there is an unbroken tradition of mysticism which can be said to embody forms of meditative practice in the West – from the Neo-Platonists such as Plotinus, through the medieval mystics both early and late such as Johannes Erigena, St. Bonaventure, John of the Cross, St. Teresa, St. Bernard of Clairvaux, followed by such personalities as Robert Parsons, Margaret Mary Alacoque, and Emanuel Swedenborg, to modern Christian contemplatives such as Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and Thomas Merton, and now Schlomo Carlbach, Bede Griffiths, and David Steindl-Rast.

Many of the mystics named above will be shown later in this essay to have been influenced by Indian systems. But

regardless of this point, Taylor explains that the kind of meditation that is now becoming ubiquitous in America is distinctly Asian:

> [M]editation per se should be taken as a uniquely Asian phenomenon which, wholesale, has only recently come to the attention of the West. In its new Western context, particularly in the United States, however, it has undergone significant reformulation. In the US it has become indigenized, so that now one can say that Asian forms of meditation have become thoroughly Americanized.

To understand the key differences between mysticism and *adhyatma-vidya*, one must appreciate that mysticism in Abrahamic religions was usually not endorsed by the mainstream institutions, and was often practiced in defiance and fear. Hence, it lacked the rigorous methodologies, replicability, documentation, lineages, or living laboratories – because the religion marginalised or even killed the mystics as heretics. Self-realisation was often seen as a threat to the authority of the Church and its dogmas.

The record of such practices in India is quite the opposite. Since dharma is not a canon or based on unique historical revelation, the individual R&D by yogis/rishis has always been respected and assimilated into the mainstream, and such exemplars have been glorified.

These inner scientists, unlike the Western mystics, were not one-off individuals who popped up here and there, once in a long time. Rather, they were the products of organised disciplines that were practiced within movements on a considerable scale. In other words, there were multiple well-established schools of *adhyatmika* investigation and learning in India, each offering instruction in its theories and practices under the guidance of masters. These schools, which served as inner research labs, had peer debates to compare and reconcile their findings. Such lineages and the debates amongst them continued for centuries, and comprise the foundation of much of the Indian Classics. Indian *adhyatma-vidya* was thus based on what was replicated by many people. This made it into a *system*, whereas such rigour was lacking among Western mystics.

While mystics in the Abrahamic traditions were usually killed or marginalised, being seen as threats to the institutions, yogis were respected as gurus in India. Hence, *adhyatma-vidya* never became mainstream or legitimate in the Abrahamic traditions. Therefore, there are no lineages or *sampradayas* of inner sciences in the West. The institutions of the Church were usually against such inner inquiry or paths of self-realisation, because mystics could subvert the dependency on the church.

Consequently, what survived of the Abrahamic mystical experiences are scattered memories, but not "how to" user manuals, as in the case of Indian traditions.

Furthermore, Western ethics is normative (i.e., rule-based) and many contemporary Western scholars (among them, Jeffrey Kripal) see mysticism as amoral and/or irrational. But Indian traditions see *adhyatma-vidya* as cultivating the *sattvic* mind, and hence producing spontaneous (non-normative) dharmic action.

Another distinction of Indian *adhyatmika* traditions compared to Western religions is that the student is not expected to "believe" a priori based on blind faith, because these are not claims based on any unique historical event or based on a canon. Rather, each

student is required to practice and attain the various states of consciousness, and to be able to engage in discourse based upon personal *adhyatmika* experience. Unlike Western philosophy, which does not require the philosopher to practice any yoga or meditation, Indian philosophical systems have been inextricably interwoven with *adhyatmika* practice.

As far as mainstream theories and practices are concerned, the West considers William James in the late nineteenth century to be one of the pioneers, if not the founder, of a systematic study of mind based on inner observations. Freud later became the leading Western psychologist, and till today, many clinical practices in Western psychology are based on his theories. As this essay shows, Indian theories have had a major impact on contemporary Western paradigms.

Questions About the Impact

Much has been written to celebrate the American appropriation of Yoga, meditation and other *adhyatma-vidyas*. For instance, Taylor writes:

> This phenomenon remains largely underestimated by the pundits of American high culture who see themselves as the main spokespersons for the European rationalist tradition in the New World ... The counter-culture movement ... was considered a revolution in consciousness ... The belief was that meditative practices not only cleansed the consciousness of psychedelics, and confirmed to pursuing alternative lifestyles, but also informed the socio-cultural direction that the lives of many young people would soon take in establishing new and permanent forms of lifestyle spiritual practice ... Such teachings are already being transmitted to a second and third generation of younger people in the United States and in Europe as well, altering irrevocably the shape and direction of spiritual life in contemporary Western culture.

For over thirty years, a vast body of academic and scientific data has been gathered in the US, about the empirical effects of various Indian *adhyatmika* techniques. Its effect on medicine has been revolutionary in many disciplines:

> While there is a revolution now going on in the neurosciences affecting how basic scientists communicate with one another, a completely different revolution is going on at the level of clinical services, one that has deep roots in values and attitudes, lifestyle choices the patient alone can make, alternative forms of healing, and an appeal to the spiritual dimension of human experience. Consequently, the National Research Council has had its say on the scientific validity of studying meditation.

These positive Indian influences upon the West also permeate art, culture, literature, liberal politics, feminism, science, spirituality, and a newly constructed Judeo-Christianity.

However, the thrust of this essay is not on the benefits being derived by the West. Rather, the following two questions drive the analysis:

Question 1

Why have modern Indians failed to utilise the very same *adhyatmika* techniques which the West has assimilated so rapidly and successfully? For instance, contrary to what many Westerners assume, Yoga and meditation are *not* taught in most Indian schools, because these traditions are deemed to be counter to "secularism," and their supporters are often denigrated as being chauvinistic and primitive.

This issue becomes especially important when one considers that many of India's social problems – including problems such as stress, corruption, violence, smoking, health, and loss of family and community harmony – can be correlated with its middle class consumerism, Westernised urbanisation, materialism and abandonment of its native traditions. At the same time, the West is utilising Indian traditions to lower rates of heart disease, manage stress, rethink the ethics of the environment and animal rights, upgrade its cosmologies and epistemologies, rethink feminism, and reinvent its religions.

Question 2

Why is the depiction of Indian traditions in popular media and the education system so negative, when the very same traditions are the source of many new American paradigms? This applies both to the West, and to India's elitist media and education, especially in the English language.

To answer these two questions, I introduce my U-Turn Theory as a model of an important set of processes in, and of, the West. This theory gives the framework within which to address these and other questions.

There are also other factors at work: Yoga found little opportunity in India, even after independence, leading the gurus to move to the fertile soil of America. Analysis of this factor would lead to yet another model, this one being about the trajectory of the post-independence Indian mind. However, in this essay only the West's process of appropriations (via U-Turns) is considered in detail, and the Indian mindsets that played critical roles are only discussed as reactions to the West rather than as primary causes. I hope to fill this gap in future essays.

The intention behind my work is not at all to stop the West's utilisation of Indian traditions. On the contrary, I wish to see an expansion and universalisation of the benefits of *adhyatma-vidya*, in two ways:

1. Geographical expansion of the use of *adhyatma-vidya* beyond the West, especially back into India.
2. Respect for, and nurturing of, the Indian roots of these traditions, so that they may continue to give us fresh harvests well into the future, and not get fossilised as museum pieces that are left to atrophy.

The U-Turn Theory

Edward Said developed his Orientalism thesis to explain how the West has used the "others" to define and construct itself. This happened both in building the physical asset base of the West, and in the intellectual plane. The intellectual appropriation continues to this day.

The U-Turn Theory is a systematic model of how this appropriation is carried out by the West and its resulting impact on the future of the traditions that are appropriated. The model may be summarised as consisting of the following five stages or processes:

Stage 1 – Student/Disciple

In the initial stage, the Westerner is a very objective student of the Indian traditions, and/or a disciple of a guru or lineage. He/she writes with the deepest respect for these traditions. Westerners at this stage have many kinds of intentions, such as:

- Many scholars in this stage

genuinely aspire to give up their Western religious affiliations, and to adopt Hinduism/Buddhism very sincerely. In many instances, India has helped such a person to "find" himself/herself. A large number of scholars do remain in this stage for the long haul, while others move on to subsequent stages, not necessarily in the exact sequence of this model.

- Some scholars wish to retain their public Judeo-Christian or Western secular identity, and are forthright that they are engaged in an intellectual fact-finding exercise only, with no desire to adopt the Indian practices or identity.
- Others may have a premeditated game plan to disguise their Western allegiance, and to later return to their original Western cultural identity. They use this stage as an *anthropological technique* to open up the channels of communication from the Indian side, by getting Indians to drop their guard and welcome them as genuine seekers.

Stage 2 – Repackaging as Neutral, New Age, or Perennial

In this stage, Indian traditions are repackaged as "original" discoveries by the Western scholar, or are relocated by interpolating within obscure Greek, Christian or other "Western" texts, or are assumed to be generic thoughts found in all cultures.

In many instances, this is done to further the author's academic career, or to expand the market for the author's books, tapes and seminars, by distancing himself from the negative image of the "caste, cows and curry" traditions.

Essentially, it is the personal ego hijacking what has been learnt, in order to serve its own selfish purposes. Many lofty arguments are given to justify this as being in the public interest. The most common arguments offered, and my responses to them, are explained in another essay.

Stage 3 – Hero's Return to His/Her Original Tradition

If a given scholar's ego is strongly rooted in Western religion, because of strong *samskaras*, he/she returns to Judaism or Christianity, with bounties of freshly appropriated knowledge to enrich it. Alternatively, the scholar repackages the material in secular vernacular, such as "Western psychology" or "phenomenology" or some other "scientific" jargon. Now the sales of books, tapes and seminars mushroom, as the Western audiences congratulate themselves for their own culture's sophistication.

Such Western scholars then become icons and symbols of the West, eliminating the need for subsequent students and practitioners to read or learn from the source Indian culture. In the process, the Indian traditions may now be relocated as museum pieces with mere historical significance, sometimes given great respect, but their roots are no longer nurtured as *living* traditions.

Joseph Campbell described this as the "hero's return" back home. This celebration may be compared to the way Napoleon was welcomed by the French nation as he marched through the streets of Paris displaying his captured loot from North Africa – slaves, ivory, gold, and other items of value. The Western archetype of hero depends heavily upon the conquest of others.

However, while Napoleon's loot was explicitly classified as such, the modern sentiments against plagiarism and need for "original scholarship" make it

necessary to erase the non-Western sources of this intellectual appropriation.

Often, the Western scholar who brings back the *adhyatmika* bounty from India does not have any problem acknowledging his debt to Indian traditions. However, it is his Western readers, students and followers who find it problematic to be basing their worldview and practice on an Indian tradition, and who insist on Western origins, so as to feel proud of their own collective ego. The scholar often merely gives in to this social pressure, or becomes complicit over time, as happened with T. S. Eliot and Carl Jung, for instance. Many examples will be discussed later.

To take a culture apart into its components, and to pluck out some key parts here and there, while denigrating the rest, is an act of violence. I shall elaborate on the consequences when a dominant culture appropriates the prized elements of a colonised culture, selectively implants these into the dominant culture's own meme-plex, and simultaneously denigrates the residue as "waste."[1]

U-Turns are harmful because they compromise the integrity of the colonised culture, just as a predator selectively digests what it wants from the prey to become healthier, and leaves the rest to rot. While the dominant culture strengthens its own cultural capital, this is done at the expense of the colonised culture that loses cohesiveness and gets devalued.

Conquerors often display their plundered property as a mark of pride. The term "Ornamental-ism" has been used to describe the appropriation of cultural assets from the colonised, and the display of these as the pride of the colonisers.

Too often, one finds appropriations by the dominant culture being justified as a favour to the colonised people. King George V, when asked why he wore India's Kohinoor diamond on his crown, is known to have said words to the effect: "The people of India should feel proud that the King of England has selected their diamond as the one he wears." This is how "Christian Yoga" and various new age appropriations from Indian culture are sometimes presented, as being a great compliment to Indians.

I have also come across the logic offered by some very India-friendly persons that civilisations must progress under Darwinian evolution of the strong conquering and digesting the weak, in order that the best of the prey becomes a part of the predator.

Too many Indians are ignorant about this cultural game theory, and become proud that the dominant culture has turned their culture and symbols into its own property – as active practices, or as passive ornaments to wear, or as museum pieces. In the long run, this reduces the colonised into pets or children or patients, under the care of the dominant culture. They are simply not equals anymore. Their contribution to the future of humanity gets truncated.

Stage 4 – Denigrating the Source

Only some scholars proceed intentionally to the next stage, in which

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[1] Richard Dawkins has developed a well-known concept of memes. A meme is defined as a "unit of culture that may be transmitted by copying," analogous to a gene as a biological unit. Memes compete with other memes in the cultural marketplace. An important notion is that configurations of memes, called meme-plexes, become stable and powerful *collectively*, just as a DNA is a large complex of genes that hold together and compete collectively. Religion has been regarded as one such meme-plex.

they – or their followers – trash the Indian traditions as being "primitive," "irrational," "socially backward or abusive," etc. This furthers the West's claims of originality, because it tries to absolve them from links to the baggage of denigrated traditions. One may think of this as a form of *academic arson*: U-Turns have often had the effect, perhaps unintentionally, of plunder with one hand, and denigration of the victim, with the other.

To understand this Western tendency, one must understand the discontinuities in many Western traditions: *Sampradayas* are Indian lineages and traditions that change over time, and yet also retain *continuity with the past.* But the West's approach to progress is often discontinuous, and emphasis is placed on explicitly discarding the past. To an Indian, there would be no need to claim originality by denigrating the guru or traditional source; but to the Western ego, it is sometimes important to show one's heroism by trying to prove the inferiority of the past sources. Note how books were burnt and leaders who refused to accept the new ideas were persecuted, whereas in India progress did not try to eradicate the past.

It is relatively easy for the Westerner to acknowledge the past that is located *within* Western thought, because that is part of his reconstructed collective ego. But it is very difficult to accept that his past also lies in non-Western origins in positive ways. Hence, U-Turns serve to bring about these historical discontinuities.

While I have not delved much into this possibility, it might be that Stage 4 is a sort of cultural Oedipus complex at work. The Oedipus complex refers to the desire to murder one's father in order to posses one's mother, so as to become oneself as an adult. One could postulate that the Indian source tradition is the father to be murdered. The mother is the spiritual and intellectual knowledge of India that is to be captured, minus the identity and context of Indian culture. This makes the West grow up as itself, with its own ego enhanced.

In some instance, Stages 3 and 4 occur in reverse sequence. For instance, Wendy Doniger, prominent Hinduism scholar, has bypassed Stage 3, and moved directly to Stage 4. However, it is plausible that later in her life, she might "rediscover" all the positive qualities of Hinduism as being in her native Judaism. Meanwhile, she specialises in the depiction of Hinduism as mainly erotic and socially abusive, and misses the *adhyatmika* message entirely.

Stage 5 – Mobilising the Sepoys and *Becharis*

This is the stage where elitist Indians become proxies for Western culture, i.e., as sepoys. (*Bechari* is a somewhat similar phenomenon, namely, of Indian women who market themselves to play the "I am a victim of culture" roles, so as to facilitate Stage 4, in exchange for a personal benefit.) By joining the Western Grand Narrative, even as second class citizens who live below the glass ceiling, they get an ego boost, and feel superior to "other" Indians.[2]

The seriousness of this stage is exacerbated by the fact that elitist Indians are seen as role models of success by the masses of India, and hence their sepoy mindset tends to

[2] My Sulekha column, titled, "The Axis of Neocolonialism," describes this in detail.

percolate downwards into the middle strata of society. They are also powerfully positioned in institutions, such as those concerning higher education in the humanities, media, public policy-making, influential NGOs, and global human rights movements. Their "superior" (i.e., Westernised) communications skills make them seem like credible spokespersons for Indian culture in the eyes of the Western media, academe and opinion leaders. Their sophisticated networking amongst each other, moreover, gives them a force multiplier.

Intellectual decolonising would necessitate a successful encounter with the sepoys, and an intervention in their well-funded programmes to reproduce themselves into the next generation.

U-Turns as Context Manipulation

Another way to understand U-Turns is by examining the way contexts are manipulated at each stage, and how Indian knowledge gets re-characterised:

- In Stage 1, the knowledge and experience is understood in its native context.
- In Stage 2, the Indian context is removed, and replaced by as much "generic" or "universal" context as possible – i.e., it gets *de-contextualised*. However, this is seldom a stable long-term representation of knowledge, as the dominant culture is well-organised to push it further along the U-Turn process.
- The knowledge is later *re-contextualised* into Judeo-Christianity and/or "Western" science, often with patents, trademarks and other claims to ownership – i.e., Stage 3 of the U-Turn.
- In Stage 4, the source Indian traditions are *mis-contextualised* so as to make them seem inferior, and to be not worthy of such positive cultural assets.

Too often, Indians evaluate Stage 2 as if it were the final state. They fail to see the history of Stage 2 as an intermediate stage that leads to these other eventual stages. Also, they fail to demand as quid pro quo that Christianity must also turn itself into a Stage 2 "generic" spirituality by dropping claims of exclusivity that form the basis of aggressive proselytising. If Hinduism-Buddhism is to become generic for the betterment of humanity, then why not also (i) genericise Abrahamic religions by turning their historical Grand Narratives into ahistorical messages, (ii) re-contextualise Jesus as one of many Avatars, and (iii) help people become better *within* their native spiritual paths as opposed to requiring a conversion.

Another consequence of the U-Turn process is *backward projection.* This refers to the tendency to use one's current context in order to reinterpret the prior stages of one's experiences, in hindsight. For instance, it is common for scholars in Stages 2, 3, or 4 to claim that their learning in Stage 1 was misguided, or the work of the Devil, or because of their having been duped by an India guru, or the result of naiveté – even though it may have lasted fruitfully for several decades.

Usually, backward projection entails erasing or downplaying the prior stages, which are acknowledged with embarrassment, and only when explicitly asked to do so. The most recent stage is given overriding prominence, to the extent of superceding the prior stages, and not just of augmenting them.

Many academic scholars of Hinduism

and of other Indian studies are personally in these latter stages, and situate themselves in their latest allegiance and identity, to project backwards and to rethink their past. For instance, many U-Turned scholars make patronising remarks that their years of immersion into Hinduism helped them to become better Christians or better Jews. While this is perfectly legitimate as autobiographical narrative, it is misleading when the backward projection enters the person's scholarship, as it often does.

U-Turners sometimes use volumes of Indian knowledge and practices to fill the large blanks and gaps in their own traditions, and often like to believe that this is merely a restoration of old lost knowledge. Indian traditions serve as "filler" to connect the dots of their own tradition in a way that makes the West seem to own everything that it learnt from India. The Indian traditions then get reduced to what is called "shareware" in the software field – an assortment of free-standing items available in the public domain, to cut and paste into the dominant culture's *proprietary* Grand Narratives.

For example, "Christian Yoga" and "Christian Centering Prayer" are presently in Stage 3. Already, many Churches have entered Stage 4 by denigrating Hinduism/Buddhism while promoting these "Christian" practices.

At New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art, all Indian art from the Mughal period has been relocated into a new section called "Islamic Art," separating it from its Indian roots. But there is no separate section for Hindu/Buddhist art. This is an example of Stage 3 being brought about at the request of Arab donors to the museum.

The West has been reinventing itself by using the latest knowledge to reinterpret its old texts. This is even considered fashionable in literary theory, by quoting Barthes and other postmodernists. However, when a Hindu scholar uses the same methodology, and interprets *Mahabharata* or other texts in ways that show space travel, cloning, and other advanced feats, such a scholar is denounced as fascist, chauvinist, and utterly unscholarly. The unstated assumption is that the West progresses, both internally and by U-Turns from others' property, but that Indian culture is static and frozen until an invader comes to advance it. Attempts by Hindus to reinterpret their texts, and to do what Christians call "constructive theology," have been attacked by Western scholars, such as Jack Hawley of Columbia University.

Most historians now agree that history is not about "reporting" empirical and objective "hard facts" about some past. Rather, the context of the present day historian (which is always a culturally biased context) is used to select the topics, to filter the data, to make the interpretations, and to "discover" patterns by connecting the scattered dots. Therefore, history is typically a backward projection and is rewritten by each new wave of dominant culture.

Not all the U-Turn stages mentioned above take place in every case, and these stages might not happen in this exact sequence each time. Often, one scholar ends his/her career at a certain stage of this U-Turn process, and the Western successors of that line of inquiry continue further along this process. For instance, Jung went to Stages 2 and 3. But he was open about his debt to India. After him, his successors, i.e., present Jungians, erased these Indic sources and have sometimes denigrated the Indic

sources as inferior in various ways. T. S. Eliot was very Hindu for a period when he composed his most famous poems, including *The Wasteland*. But today, this Indic influence is never mentioned in literature courses on Eliot.

It is also important to note that Eurocentrism is mostly an unintentional and unconscious archetype that shapes the "truth," because the person is so immersed in the myths of Western identity.

Today, "South Asianised desis" (as they call themselves) are often in Stage 5, and are tripping over each other to prove their accomplishments as sepoys working for the dominant culture. Their knowledge of Indian culture is largely through stereotypes learnt from persons who are in Stages 2 through 4. They have blindly accepted these stereotypes due to their own ignorance, identity, shame, and the superior *brand value* of Western theories, and have re-engineered their own identities to fit into the dominant culture's Grand Narrative.

The U-Turn is a process under the control of the dominant culture from above. But the neo-colonised culture below responds in a variety of ways. The diagram below highlights the various ways in which Indians respond and adapt to the U-Turns.

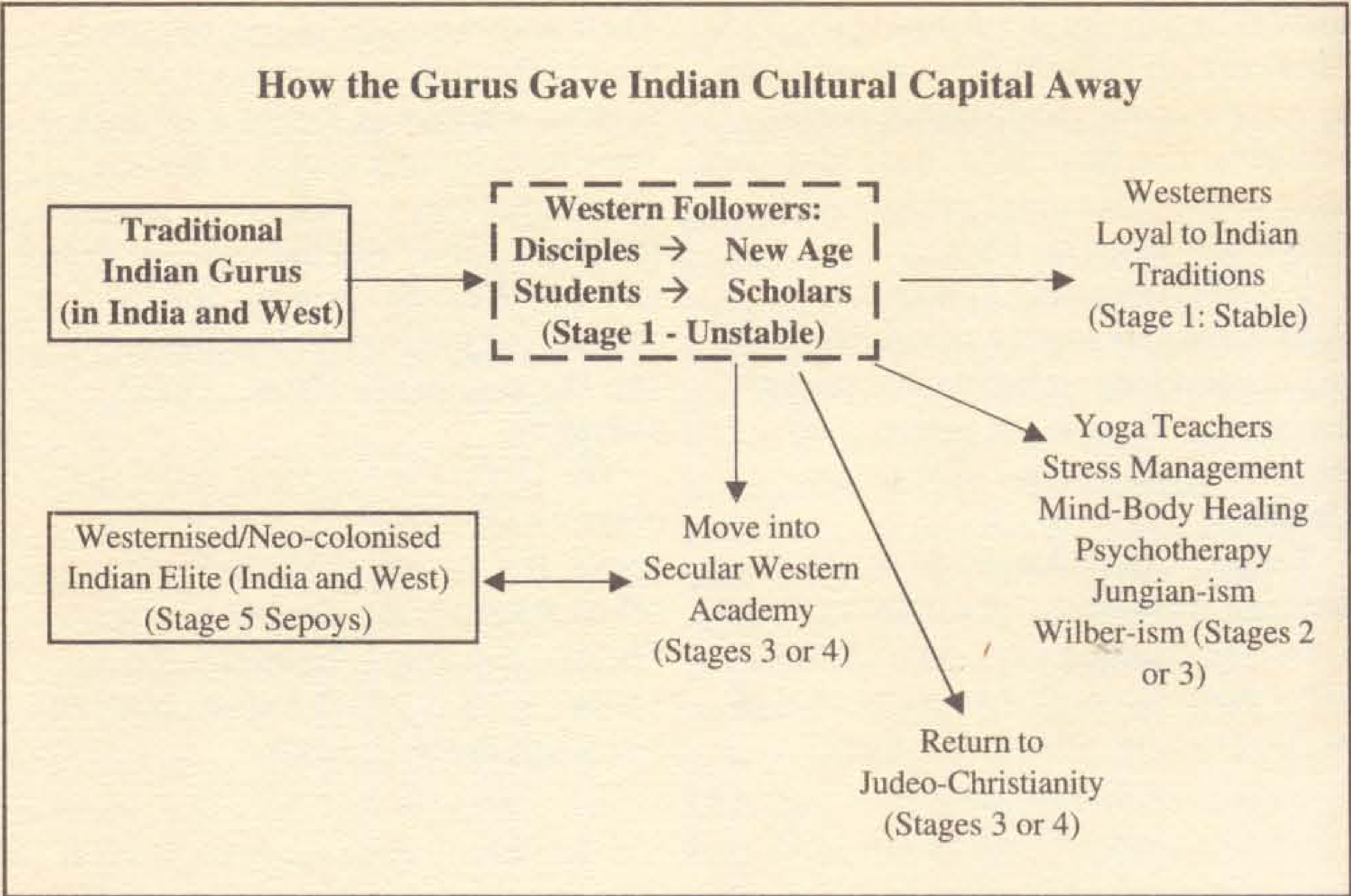
Impact of the West's U-Turns upon Indians

WEST: Stage 1 → **Stage 2** → **Stage 3** → **Stage 4**

INDIA:
Positive influence on Indians to reverse the cultural shame.

Creates a spectrum of responses from below:

A. Sepoys and *becharis* (No. 4 influence)
B. Generic "same"/hybridised (No. 2, No. 3 influence)
C. World negation (ignorant of No. 1)
D. Hindutva chauvinism (over-emphasis on identity)
E. Intellectual responses to No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4 (our goal)



The above diagram shows how Indian gurus and other traditional sources of learning, both those located in India and those that migrated to the West, have been vehicles of knowledge transfer to Western followers. This trend became especially prominent since the 1960s. The Westerners included both secular students and spiritual seekers.

However, as the dotted box above indicates, this initial transmission was *transitory*, and not the permanent state in most cases. Hence, any evaluation of the transfer of Indian knowledge must be based on an examination of the entire sequence of stages, right up to the end of the U-Turn, and not only based on the nature of the initial transfer. Most Indian gurus and other community leaders have failed to analyse this properly. They have simply not gone deep enough into what transpires at the subsequent stages, and have naively assumed that the initial transfer has caused a permanent transformation in the Western recipient.

Many Westerners have remained loyalists in Stage 1, for the long term. However, others have moved on to Stages 2 or 3, and have launched very successful careers and ventures in a variety of spiritual and secular fields, across the spectrum of Yoga teaching, stress management, mind-body healing and enhancement, psychotherapy, Jungian and Wilber movements, and Western feminism, among other fields.

Many academic scholars in religious studies and other humanities disciplines have drunk from this spring of Indian traditions for much of their careers. Yet, some U-Turners have now become prominent Hindu-bashers.

There are almost 200,000 Indian students in US colleges (including over 65,000 foreign students from India). US colleges are a critical junction in the

identity formation and/or identity destruction of young Indians, at a stage when they have left traditional homes and families, and are starting to define themselves. While many of them take humanities courses expecting to learn more about their own traditions in continuity with their personal and/or family traditions, what they are often taught is a heavy dose of Hinduphobia, sometimes in very subtle and sophisticated ways.

As the above diagram shows, this has resulted in disconnects between the Indian mindsets in the two left-hand side boxes: The Indians who have a positive identity based on traditions, versus the neo-colonised Indian elite. This schism has an impact on India, because neo-colonised Indian *desis* in the West have their networks of influence deeply rooted back home in Indian universities, NGOs and the media. In effect, these prominent NRIs, who are awarded and certified by the West, serve as the new "Brahmins" and "gurus" of the English language educated youth back in India.

Many of these Indian influences were considered fundamental breakthroughs in Western thought when they first entered mainstream Western culture. But over time, these influences became erased, and the intellectual discourse today often considers them as being indigenous to the West, or locates them in some perennial/generic category. The Western mapmaker of India's knowledge systems becomes the starting point of the knowledge system for future generations, who naturally see everything positive as Western. The Indian texts and traditions may thus be seen as irrelevant. Examples of some major Indian *adhyatmika* influences upon the West are given in my other essays.

Yoga and Meditation

Yoga is today a multi-billion dollar industry in the US. There are 18 million Americans practicing it, according to a 2002 article in *Newsweek*. *Yoga Journal* estimates that the total expenditure on Yoga classes, videos, books, conferences and retreats is around $27 billion annually. There are around 25,000 Yoga teachers in the US, and the *Yoga Journal* claims to have over 700,000 subscribers.

What is disturbing in all this is that less than 2% of the Yoga students in USA, and very few Yoga teachers are Indians. One is left wondering whether this is the result of Indians' cultural shame, which, in turn, could be the product of a post-independence education system and ethos that downgraded native culture in order to "modernise."

Even if the revenue figure of $27 billion per year were considered inflated by 50%, this industry would still be twice as large as India's software exports to the US. The point being that it is not of trivial consequence even in purely economic terms.

Yogi Amrit Desai was one of the first Indians to start training and certifying Americans to teach Yoga, starting in the 1960s, and that is how the whole American Yoga movement started. He alone trained over 5,000 American Yoga teachers. He founded and headed the Kripalu Yoga in Massachusetts which became the leading trainer of American Yoga teachers.

But like most other Yoga movements launched by Indians many decades ago, Kripalu has now been taken over by Western professional management, and its founder, Yogi Amrit Desai has been removed. The intellectual property rights to Amrit Desai's hundreds of hours of course materials, lectures,

books and videos are the property of the institution, and not of Yogi Amrit Desai. The new management is less rooted in the cultural elements than the founder was. While Kripalu is still a very India-friendly institution, it seems to be gradually on the road to the Americanisation of Yoga and the erasure of Indian sources.[3]

The Transcendental Meditation and the TM-Siddhi Programme have been Maharashi Mahesh Yogi's legacy in this field. As Michael Murphy has repeatedly confirmed, "the most prolific research on meditation in the United States in sheer numbers of published studies has been and continues to be on transcendental meditation" (Taylor 11). Maharishi's researchers have compiled over 500 studies on TM in five volumes, under the headings of physiology, psychology, sociology, and theoretical models.

Research on TM has studied its effects on asthma, angina, high blood pressure, intellectual problem-solving ability, thinking and recall, creativity, self-esteem, self-actualisation and others areas. Tests have included endocrine levels, effects on neuro-transmitters, and measurements of altered cell metabolism. Sociological research has also looked into the effects of teaching TM to police, military, juvenile offenders, incarcerated adults, high school students, athletes, managers and others. Taylor praises the TM's contributions to the mind sciences:

> Their expertise with certain aspects of Western science has become quite sophisticated, however, creating an altogether new avenue of investigation at the interface between science and spirituality ... TM researchers have successfully been able to master the blind peer review process and were recently awarded some $2.5 million in research grants from the National Institutes of Health.

As a result of pioneering research by TM and others, the situation has rapidly changed towards more mainstream research into meditation. Taylor confirms:

> Basic experimental studies on the subject of meditation have steadily increased, while outcome research in clinical settings has grown at an even faster rate ... The total rate of increase between 1988 and 1996 in articles in scholarly and scientific journals as well as trade books has been nothing short of spectacular....
>
> Major changes are currently underway within basic sciences that presage not only further evolution of the scientific method but also changes in the way science is viewed in modern culture. An unprecedented new era of interdisciplinary communication within the subfields of the natural sciences, a fundamental shift from physics to biology, and the cognitive neurosciences revolution have liberalized attitudes towards the study of meditation and related subjects.

Later essays discuss how TM has been appropriated by mainstream Western institutions in the academe, medicine, Christianity and other fields, while the sources have been carefully erased in many cases.

Rajneesh was another pioneer in America, and was the author of hundreds of books, videotapes and other intellectual property to teach a variety of esoteric Indian practices. The rights to his intellectual property are owned by offshore trusts, and the control of these

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[3] For further details visit the Kripalu website.

trusts is entirely in the hands of a group of American and Swiss lawyers. According to an article in *The Times of India*, the royalty from Rajneesh's works in 30+ languages is around $400 billions annually, and none of this money goes back to India, or to the root of the traditions that Rajneesh's knowledge came from. The lawyers consider the money to be the property of the trusts under their control.

This has become a common story: Indian institutions in this field often become very large and rich (both in tangible assets and intellectual property), and then get taken over by Westerners, who might mean well for a while, but the organisation ceases to be linked to its source culture in India.

Being non-profit organisations, there are no shareholders, and hence control goes where the majority of trustees take it. Since Indians did not participate actively in this Yoga movement, it was mainly American devotees and students who assumed most of the leadership roles. As many of these devotees made U-Turns in their own private lives, the organisations under their influence also became more Americanised and less Indian. The gurus did not plan successorships well, nor did they secure institutional control, to ensure the continuity of tradition in the same manner as *sampradayas*.

Using an industry model (because Yoga is a multi-billion dollar industry), one can look at its retail, distribution, and R&D components. The retail level consists of the thousands of Yoga studios where students go, and Indians own only a very small fraction of this, with the exception of Bikram Yoga. The distribution level consists of the teacher-training schools, and these have been steadily slipping into non-Indians' control.

Now the R&D function, where new forms of Yoga and meditation are derived, is rapidly driving the field towards products such as "Christian Yoga," "Pilates, Christian Centering Prayer" and other derivatives, and these derivatives are less and less linked to their Indian cultural roots. The latest Yoga product on the American market is Yoga for kids (Visit <http://www.cnn.com/2003/EDUCATION/07/25/offbeat.yoga.ap/index.html>).

Over the past century, Tantra has been taken over and repackaged as sex. Key concepts like *yantra* and mandala are being proclaimed as fresh discoveries called "sacred geometry," and then replanted into Judeo-Christian frameworks.

There are many Christian or pseudo-Christian copycats of Indian traditions emerging. For example, the Solar Logos Foundation has an interesting and very above-board agenda: It teaches Parmahansa Yogananda's Kriya Yoga that was learnt by its founder from the Self-Realisation Fellowship. But it repackages these Hindu practices as a part of Christianity. Here is how it explains its mission:

> The profound visions, revelations and divine guidance received in the lifetime of founder Norman Paulsen, a living direct disciple and ordained minister of Parmahansa Yogananda, are the cornerstone of the teachings. Yogananda stated that God wanted to see people form colonies of men, women, and children, living, working and meditating together for the greater good of the whole world. The Solar Logos Foundation exemplifies this, and encourages the formation of such colonies.
> (<http://www.solarlogosfoundation.org>)

It depicts the yogic higher states as Christ Consciousness: "Each one of us

has the ability to establish communication with this Christ Consciousness, the very mind of God." The organisation's programme and books start with Kriya Yoga, and end with this repackaged into Christ Consciousness.

Andrew Cohen is prominent among those who are officially in Stage 2 while their students often utilise them as Stage 3. His commercially successful magazine, *What is Enlightenment,* and his string of ashrams in many parts of the world offer the Westerner a managed U-Turn programme to appropriate the bounties of the East without a loss of Western ego. The person is secure from "weird" Indian things, and is assured of being returned back to his/her original Judeo-Christian identity – a sort of Disneyworld ride.

Acem Meditation has exported its "made-in-Norway" repackaged meditation back to India very successfully. Its web site (<http://www.acem.com/india/index.html>) brags of an endorsement from *The Hindu* newspaper:

> As a meditation technique, this one is certainly different. It is process oriented and not result oriented. It is based on the psychology of stillness and emphasizes the inculcation of a free, open mental attitude. It is from – hold your breath – Norway, an European country. (*The Hindu* 19 Oct. 1998)

Star Edge is yet another one of many American organisations in this business. Its product Avatar claims to promote the unity of world traditions by taking Hindu-Buddhist ideas, mixing them up with others' jargon, and turning them into "trademarked" and proprietary products (<www.starsedge.com>).

The Church of Scientology and Dianetics by Hubbard are other examples of large-scale movements with Indian origins that are unacknowledged.

Da Free John, a former disciple of Swami Muktananda, heads a huge Fiji-based ashram and movement, in which he claims to be the living avatar.

Wayne Dyer remains very loyal to Indian spiritual traditions, while playing a role as Stage 2 leader by offering generic spiritual wisdom. Many of his readers then take this knowledge further down the U-Turn path.

Eckhart Tolle has outsmarted the U-Turn Theory by never being publicly linked to any Indian influence. His launch as a Western guru is presented as a sudden non-dualistic enlightenment in Europe while he was sitting on a bench in a park eating ice cream.

Desi Shame

The inferiority complex of Stage 5 Indians became clear when the Yoga Journal did a recent survey of the attitudes of Indian Americans concerning Yoga (Budhos). David Life, co-founder of Jivanmukti Yoga, summarised it well:

> Those [Indian Americans] I've met have a certain naiveté about their own tradition. They have some vague idea of their roots. These kids didn't have a traditional upbringing, and they've suffered a bit of separation.

For example, Tripti Bose, a former psychotherapist who came to the United States in the 1960s said:

> Because of colonization we were brainwashed that yoga was superstition, not something that you can scientifically rely on. Anybody who talked about yoga was looked at kind of funny. In India, if somebody did yoga, they would ask, 'Who is this weird person?

One typical Indian middle-class man, Kumar Dube, said that Yoga was some

ancient, backward, even superstitious practice. The journalist wrote that he "loves nothing better than to offer disquisitions on Hinduism and Yoga. 'Growing up under the British Raj, anything Indian was considered no good,' he tell me one afternoon at his son Siddhartha's apartment in New York City's Greenwich Village. 'Some kind of stupid hocus-pocus like the famous rope trick,' says Dube."

Somini Sengupta has become infamous for her Hinduphobic articles in *The New York Times*. Her specialty is to focus on "Hindu abuses," depicting Hinduism as a culture of atrocities against women, minorities, Muslims and the poor. She told the *Yoga Journal* that she has taken Yoga classes for stress reduction, but quickly gives a disclaimer to distance herself from the tradition: "It's part of an exercise trend, and I treat it as my form of exercise." She reported that she refuses to participate in the Sanskrit chanting in class, "because I don't know the meaning." To her, Yoga is no more than just another "part of American pop culture."

Reetika Vazirani, a poet and author, said that she had felt "ashamed of things Indian. Yoga had an atmosphere of 'ancient and back there.' The Yoga books showed men with almost elemental qualities. I didn't have the cultural confidence to be proud." Unfortunately, *India Abroad* reported that she recently committed suicide using kitchen knives, also killing her 15-month old son. Her friends described her as "someone who has everything going for her, she was the recipient of many honors and awards." (*India Abroad* 1 Aug. 2003: M4).

In the same issue of *India Abroad*, on the facing page, Arthur Pais reports that fiction novels by Indians do not get good reviews if they fail to cater to the stereotypes of Indian society. One American publisher told him bluntly, "People who read books by Indian authors are not ready to embrace a writer who is not dealing with class and caste tensions."

However, things are not so one-sided among the second-generation Indians. Sunaina Maira, Professor of Asian American Studies at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, researches the identities of Indian-American youth. She finds that:

Most of the second generation has a feeling of cultural ownership. They remember going to school and being ashamed that their mother wore a sari and a *bindi*. They worked and struggled to learn about Indian traditions; they've earned the right to display their *bindis*. It came at the price of being made fun of. Their feeling was, "We had to struggle to present our Indian-ness in the face of being harassed; we had to fight to hold on to our rituals." They were just getting over their shame and discomfort, and at that moment Indo-chic took off. Now it is so easy for a white American to take on this cultural sign. That's what bothers them.

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Contributions for *Evam*

Evam: Forum on Indian *Re*presentations welcomes research papers, essays, articles, interviews, notes, reviews, and other publishable material that will enhance the study or understanding of India both as an actual place and as an accumulation of ideas. Given the plurality and heterogeneity of India, *Evam* is alert and open not only to a variety of topics but also to a diversity of perspectives and methodologies. Both critical and creative writing is welcome, though the latter must specifically have as its theme or subject some aspect of India. *Evam* endeavours to facilitate and encourage new knowledge about India by promoting writing that discovers or *re*covers new ground and does so in ways that are vitally unusual or exciting. Ideally, each essay is expected to consider a well-defined issue or question, explore it purposefully, and clearly elucidate consequences or implications of such an inquiry. Each contribution, by its passion and/or lucidity, is also expected to engage an interested international audience. Manuscripts of varied length will be considered, but normally submissions should be between 3000 and 9000 words, inclusive of footnotes and works cited. Manuscripts may be submitted electronically to: evam@samvadindia.com or by mail to N-16/B Saket, New Delhi – 110017, INDIA. Manuscripts will not be returned; authors are therefore requested to retain copies. Accepted submissions must be sent on diskettes or as attachments in any of the widely used word processing software. Illustrations/photographs and other visual material should be sent as high resolution files as attachments or on CDs. All manuscripts must be prepared in the MLA style. Indian words, especially those naturalised into English or frequently used, will not be transliterated or italicised. However, long passages or quotations from languages other than English should be transliterated and accompanied by translations. Each submission will be read by peers, whose identities will be withheld, but whose comments and suggestions may be passed on to the authors. Authors are therefore requested not to identify themselves in the body of the text, but only in a separate cover page, which should also contain their postal and email addresses, institutional affiliations, and a brief biographical note. Authors submitting work simultaneously to other publications should clearly state this when offering anything to *Evam*.

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